

CHAPTER III

Theatrical Analysis of Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry's *Naga-Chayya*

Any event that involves the interplay of time, space, action, performers and spectators is understood to carry the possibilities of theatre. Indeed, historians, archaeologists and anthropologists assure that proofs of performance- that may be taken to represent forms of drama or theatre- occur among all the cultures of the world and can be traced as far as human knowledge goes. According to Richard Schechner in his book, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, he writes:

...dancing, singing, wearing masks and/ or costumes, impersonating other humans, animals or supernatural's, acting out stories... are coexistent with the human condition (11)

Thus human behaviour in any form is a construct for some sort of performance, which in turn is what theatre validates. Victor Turner's beautiful articulation about the prospects of a theatre activity reads:

Cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances... A performance is dialectic of "flow," that is, spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one, and "reflexivity," in which the central meanings, values and goals of a culture are seen "in action," as they shape and explain behaviour. (qtd in Schechner and Appe 1)

So theatrical performances seek to explain cultures aurally, which are nothing but portions of literature textually. Before moving forward with any further analysis, it is likely important to understand this simple yet complex relationship of performance and text.

1. The Performance – Text Relationship

Theatre in itself is just an empty open space, a bare lifeless platform and its real soul lies in literature which gives it the power to be meaningful. Short stories, works of fiction or documentaries when enacted on stage perceive a new life in live artists giving

to the page characters a wonderful breath of warmth. The text usually serves as the guide to the production concept and so it is necessary to analyse the relationship between performance and the text before this attempt moves toward performance analysis.

Theatre is for performance and for performance a dramatic text or a script is used, so needless to stress upon the fact that both the genres theatre and drama perceive their full existence in each other. Nevertheless, in spite of having such an interdependent relationship both the dramatic text and performance have complex concerns. Theatre is an absurd and ironic art because it is at the same time both a literary production (performance of a dramatic script) and a concrete performance (individual theatrical performance) in itself. As such theatre is both timeless (indefinitely repeatable and renewable) and of the instant (never reproduced identically). The performance taking place today compared to a production ten years back is more significant and applicable. In contrast, the text in theory is forever fixed and intangible.

The next paradox is that theatre is a skill which engages extremely superior textual creation, poetry of the greatest and the most complex kind. For this refined depiction, this high-class art requires ample practice with detailed grooming about signs and gesture. Theatre must be seen and understood by all, “immediately read and readable phenomenon” but text is an infinite reading process. (Anne Umbersfeld 3)

Next paradox is that in dramatic text we experience the result of single creator’s art, maybe it is of William Shakespeare or Chetan Bhagat- but theatre itself requires the active and creative participation by many artists. Anne Umbersfeld significantly comments upon this paradox reads “it is an intellectual and difficult art whose fulfilment is reached only at that instant when its collective spectator- a crowd of people- become an audience for whom a unifying principle can be presupposed with all that is implied by way of shared credulity”(4). This means that the transaction of performance from the artist to the audience is always mysterious because what is depicted and what is perceived can be different.

This suggests to the position of theatre which is both dangerous and fortunate at the same time. There may be many reasons for this tense situation. Firstly, Theatre involves big financial budgets which at times lead them, instead of being for the masses, to be subservient to the dominant class. Secondly, Most of the times the production group manages to secretly overpower the creative heads concerned with the performance. Lastly, the important reason for the theatre being a dangerous art concerns the censor boards which are always on a watch against theatre productions. Probably they are on a look out for easy money in the form of bribes and sometimes take the recourse of police intrusion or use their powers to falsely disapprove a performance with censor bans. (Anne Umbersfeld 3-4) In spite of all these obstacles the theatrical art has emerged as one of the most lovable and entertaining art all over the world. Its appeal to the audience has been immense and has always helped to awaken masses on many levels.

This mass appeal of the theatrical art has been a global welfare. With time every nook and corner of the world showed signs of this popular art. In this respect, Indian theatre also saw its progressive streak. But the rich timeline of Indian theatre had to pass through a number of ups and downs before its successful stage acquired a firm footing. Indian theatre has been a saga of endless traditions and rituals which has been an ancient aesthetic practice. The findings of old manuscript of play texts and discourses imply that theatre existed in the Indian subcontinent from the very beginning of human civilization. According to the *Natyashastra* (compiled probably between 2000 BCE and 2nd century CE) of Bharata, a comprehensive discourse on the art of performance and drama was a bequest from the gods to the humans. The treatise confirms the sophistication and superiority of ancient Indian theatre. According to the manuscripts, the very first play performed, happened to find its execution in heaven, when the gods celebrated their victory on the demons. Apparently, theatre has always been best utilised for discharge of emotions and feelings. These emotions were aptly visualized by ancient Hindu theorists in terms of two varieties of expressive production: *Lokadhmi* (realistic) and *Natyadhmi* (artistic), *Lokadhmi* communicating human behaviour and conduct and *Natyadhmi* expressing artistic portrayals through usage of symbolism and gestures. Although with passage of time Indian dramatic literature receded, yet

performance traditions still flourished through dancers, musicians, singers, and storytellers, just as the basic aesthetics of Bharata survived, morphed into various alternatives, through the traditional folk and classical forms. In reality, these traditional forms never saw their ending but re-emerged and refreshed in many forms for instance, through Bertolt Brecht's Epic theatre. Nevertheless, to analyse the ups and downs of these traditional folk elements during the time of Indian theatre, it is convenient to have a kaleidoscopic view of the genesis and growth of Indian theatre.

2. A Kaleidoscopic view of the Genesis and Growth of Indian Theatre in English

To understand the general picture of the growth of theatre in India, a rough categorization of the genre into three phases: the classical period; the traditional period and the modern period have been demarcated.

Stage I- This stage covers the theatre practice up to about 1000 A.D. and the theatre tactics common during this stage included the rules, regulations and modifications promoted by *Natya Shastra*. These rules were applicable to all the scenarios concerning theatre practice, covering from writing of plays and performance spaces to various standards for performance of the plays. Major playwrights of this era included Bhasa, Kalidasa, Shudraka, Vishakhadatta and Bhavabhuti who gave immense contribution through their dramatic pieces in Sanskrit. The themes prevalent during such times mostly acquired their plots from history, epics, folk-tales and legends. Such plots because of their enormous metaphoric dwellings required a visual presentation through gestures, mime and movement for which performers well-versed in all fine arts were deployed. As a result of such familiar themes, the audience easily recognized and associated with such stories. All the thought-provoking ideas and messages came to the audience from their already known legends but still their theatrical performance always won their interest as well as appraisal. The noted German playwright and director, Bertolt Brecht, evolved his theory of 'Epic Theatre' and concept of 'Alienation' precisely from these sources.

Stage II- This stage covers the time period from 1000 A.D onwards up to 1700 A.D. and includes in its practice those standards of theatre which were based on oral traditions. Verbal beliefs or oral traditions very commonly pass on from one generation

to another and so such a form of influenced theatre continues even today in almost every part of India. Emergence of this kind of theatre is related with the change of political set up in India as well as the coming into existence of diverse regional languages in different parts of the country. Apparently, whole of this period is known as folk or traditional, i.e., theatre being handed over from generation to generation through an oral tradition.

The classical theatre which is founded on *Natya Shastra* was much more refined and polished in its form and character and totally urban-oriented whereas this traditional theatre sprouted out of rural roots. Though other ingredients of theatre remained almost the same, i.e., use of music, mime, movement, dance and narrative elements but this later theatre was more effortless, abrupt and improvisational even to the point of being contemporary and modern. Whereas the classical theatre was almost similar in its production in all parts of India at a particular time, the traditional theatre took to two different kinds of presentational process - all the folk and traditional forms in northern India are chiefly vocal, i.e., singing and recitation-based like *Ramlila*, *Rasleela*, *Bhand Nautanki* and *Wang* without any intricate gestures or movements and elements of dance.

Stage III- This stage is again concerned with a change in the political set up in India but this time it is not the internal pressures but outside force coming from the West had influenced it. The British rule covering the time duration of about 200 years brought the Indian theatre into one on one relationship with western theatre. It is for the first time that the text and performance theatre focus completely towards realistic or naturalistic depiction. This does not mean that theatre tradition before this era lacked in realism or naturalism. It was always there as also foreseen in *Natya Shastra* through thoughts of *Lokdharmi*, i.e., a method of arrangement linked with day-to-day gestures and conduct and *Natyadharami*, - i.e., a style more and more presentational and theatrical in appearance. Nevertheless the stories installed were consistently from the same sources. But in the modern theatre the story also considerably changed its thematic nature by focusing more on depiction of a common man than big heroes and Gods.

These three stages roughly cover the entire picture of Indian theatre from the ancient time up- to the present time. The theatre in modern India is a grouping of the

three different phases of its evolution demonstrated in its historical outlook. Modern Indian theatre, as we know it today, has an inheritance that is influenced by and draws motivation from various sources. These sources join together to construct a ground for modern yet traditional Epic theatre to progress. (Devendra Raj Ankur)

Stage IV- This stage of Indian theatre, chiefly referred as the Modern and the Post-Modern times started to grow more in 1950's. Honestly, the very kernel of the modish aspects can be traced back to the times of British Raj because a major influence of west survived efficiently through the modern narrative forms. Modern themes witnessed a major change and the focus shifted from religious, mythological and historical concerns to more rationalized and realistic contexts. Besides this an intermingling of topics concerning the lives of the heroes, Gods, celestial beings and age old myths along with common man and his daily chores, fears and tears came to the limelight. Thus the impact of Bertolt Brecht begins. Nissar Allana views that after independence, "when the meaning of 'culture and tradition' needed to be interpreted in a modern context, in evolving a new identity," Bertolt Brecht's resurging the folk theatre traditions "brought about a wider awareness of the possibility that such elements could become part of the modern idiom in the Indian context"(2-3) .

Bertolt Brecht stand in the similar decisive relation to the late twentieth century Indian theatre as Shakespeare did in the nineteenth century. Both were responsible for a revolutionary change in the dramatic writing of their times. Satyabrata Chaudhuri opines, "I do not know of any other country where the literati have ever made one dramatist the epitome, test, and symbol of progressive culture as we Indians have done with Bertolt Brecht" (n.pag). A striking number of leading Indian directors, including: Vijya Mehta, Ebraham Alkazi, B.V Karanth, Rudra Prasad Sengupta and Jabber Patel have lectured on Brecht, supported his methods, and undertaken major productions of his plays around the country.

One such Indian female director, for whom Bertolt Brecht's dramatics has been primary to her production, is Chandigarh- based Punjabi veteran Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry. For her B.V Kranth has been her mentor and guide and so automatically the impact of Brecht's Epic theatrics is visible in her productions. It is her adaptation of

Naga-Mandala on stage, which will be the course of analysis in this chapter. But before beginning the analysis of the theatrical version of *Naga-Mandala*, a quick glance at the life history of Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry has been illustrated.

3. Life and works of Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry

Life- One of the most successful female directors of post-1980 period Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry has started a new era for Punjabi theatre. Born on April 14th, 1951 in Amritsar, her father, Dr. Man Singh Nirankari was an eminent ophthalmologist, who retired as the principal of Medical College Amritsar. Along with being a doctor he was a theologian and used to write poems. Apparently, it was her father's interest in poetry that motivated Neelam Mansingh towards art and literature. She did her schooling from Sacred Heart High School in Amritsar and then did M. A. in History of Fine Arts from Punjab University, Chandigarh. After this she wanted to pursue theatre and drama on more serious grounds. So she went to National School of Drama for its proper training. After her course of three years was over, she shifted to Mumbai.

Her stay in Mumbai was rather short after which she moved to Bhopal in 1979, and joined the Rang Mandala, a repertory associated with Bharat Bhavan. Since 1984 she has been staying in Chandigarh and created a theatre company of her own under the name 'The Company'. She is also working as a teacher in the Department of Indian Theatre of the Punjab University. From 1990, she is heading the department as its Chairperson.

Neelam Mansingh lives in a big posh house in sector IV in Chandigarh. Her house is an exemplified museum in itself full of paintings and drawings from various national and international artists. Her husband, Pushvinder Singh Chowdhry is working as marketing consultant and they have two children; Angad and Kabir. Angad is a researcher and Kabir is trying for his career in films.

Career – It was nothing in her background which guided her to the discipline of theatre. Headed by a doctor father, her science-inclined family wanted the future generation to grow up more as doctors and engineers. On the contrary, Neelam Mansingh was a visionary child and maths and physics was never her forte. She passed her time more in reading, painting and dreaming of becoming a nun. With such a creative bent of mind it

was but natural for her to opt for theatre and dramatics. The turning point in her life was when she performed for the first time in Genet's play directed by Balwant Gargi and said "I opened the script and got a new life," ("Restoring lost Voices" 17). As a backstage assistant for the first time, this small-town timid and shy girl saw open and informal behaviour between the sexes. Neelam Mansingh came from a social set-up where women were meant for household chores and males for the outside world. Women equality, empowerment or self-identity was nonexistent in the dictionaries of the female psychology. In spite of all such social restrictions theatre gave Neelam Mansingh the confidence to free herself from the four walls of the house and join NSD (National School of Drama).

It was here in NSD that Neelam Mansingh learnt and experienced theatre in true sense. She understood theatre was not merely a performance but a display of many layers of traditions, histories, and cultures, socio-political structures on one side and individual genius and innovation on another. With passage of time her experience prepared her to experiment with some exemplary and innovative theatrical methods to set up a new kind of theatre in Punjabi which is a spectacular departure from the literary norms and concerns. "Basically my premise", Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry comments in an interview, "was to take the world's classics- regionalize the national and nationalize the regional- because I feel that you cannot be truly contemporary unless you know your own roots" ("Unpeeling the layers within yourself" 21). Establishing serious theatre in the language of rugged truck drivers and localities, and making it worthy of winning national and international acclaim took her over two decades.

Neelam Mansingh's texts have ranged from Karnad's 1988 play *Naga-Mandala* to the life of ancient poet Bhartrihari (*Raja Bharatrihari*, 1997), and such classics as Lorca's *Yerma*, Racine's *Phaedra* (as *Fida*, 1997) and Jean Giraudoux's *The Mad Woman of Chaillot* (as *Shahar mere di Pagal aurat*, 1995). She extends performance scripts from fictional materials, but most of her sources tend to be foreign. Just when critics noted recurrence and artistic collapse, Neelam came up with an eerily haunting "*The Suit*" (2007).

Chowdhry's theatre group has participated in a number of major national and International Festivals. Among these are The London International Festival of Theatre (1993, 1995,1997) The Uzbekistan International Theatre Festival (1993), The Festival d'Avignon (1995), The Festival of Perth (1999,2000), The Singapore Arts Festival (2002), The Laokoon Festival in Hamburg (2003), The Japan Festival of the Arts (2003 and 2007 in Tokyo and Kyoto), The Zanani Festival in Lahore (2004,2005,2006), and the Sadler Wells Theatre Festival in London (2009). The plays produced by her repertory, The Company, have for the most part been based upon great classics of the western world, rendered in Punjabi by the eminent poet, Surjit Patar.

Considering her rich contribution to the field of theatre in India, specifically in Punjab, it is a small wonder that she has been awarded the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi award and lately also bestowed with the highest acclaim of Padma Bhushan. Though her fans had been awaiting the announcement for long, the thespian herself is quite modest about her great achievements.

Style-Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry is best known for her originality in theatre, richness in style and thoughtfulness in expression. Human concerns have always been the manifesto of her works but feminism specifically has managed to gain a unique language which is seldom scornful and nearly always compelling. Intensity and strength continues to imbibe her idiom with an authenticity which every theatre practitioner yearns for his/her work.

For her, childhood memories, day- to- day household chores and innocent living are very precious. This simplicity and love of realism landmarks both her personal and profession life. No doubt she has been honoured by both national and international appraisals but her personality continuous to be extremely humble, compassionate and humane. Anyone with the concerns for theatre can meet her without the feeling of any uneasiness or hesitation. Nevertheless, she values passion along with intensity and honesty of character which always makes her unearth unsaid stories behind simple and naive looking portraits.

The backbone of her theatricals is her theatrical troupe The Company which she founded in Chandigarh in 1984. Those were the times when Punjabi was scorned and

disregarded by the superior cream of the Sikh community and the Hindus preferred their language Hindi as their medium of expression. In such an unsupportive atmosphere Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry worked day in and out to reach out to the native language and the people in every possible way. While talking about her difficulties in handling Punjabi she writes “To get into theatre was in itself a somersault for me. Doing Punjabi theatre was to do cartwheels.” (“Restoring Lost Voices”) She read a lot, travelled a lot and reviewed a lot of Punjabi literature, especially the classics before gisting out in her works. The comparatively desolate theatre field that Punjab was, made her work difficult.

She tried to look into Punjabi tradition, myth, culture, dress and dance to get closer to the Punjabi language. She focused her attention on the *naqqals*, which were one of the neglected yet important traditional forms of performance in Punjab. In an interview to P. Anima, Neelam Mansingh’s take upon the traditional *naqqals* read, “With Punjab, everyone talked of the *Giddha* and *Bhangda*. I needed something I could explore, a vocabulary for training. Then I came upon the *naqqals*, who were like the *jatras* of Bengal. But unlike Bengal, Punjab being a hotbed of political and social upheavals, the *naqqals* couldn’t enjoy any continuity of form. These were performed at Ramleelas, but were not economically viable.” (“Seen by Scene” 27). She made these experienced and culturally rich *naqqal* performers part of her troupe ‘The Company’. These nomadic actors, skilful in the use of folk music, dance and acrobatics for burlesque/satire, gave a new dimension to the progress of her aesthetics. Since then The Company has been performing at regular intervals, nationally and internationally and has been able to make its strong influence felt in the field of theatre dramatics.

Neelam Mansingh’s take on the *Naga-Mandala*- Neelam Mansingh staged *Naga-Mandala* in Punjabi for the first time in Shankara theatre festival in Bangalore on November 14, 1989. As the script of the play was translated into Punjabi the audience of Bangalore found it a little strange and unexpected. Nevertheless, the performance was successful; rather the locals enjoyed it as new and unique experience. Chaman Ahuja’s review about the play reads “*Naga-Mandala* was Neelam’s first major work and for the first time, speech, narration, recitation, songs, dances, costumes, props and movements, stood unified. In her creation, she does not just direct the play; she

recreates it- a recreation that earned full approval from the playwright. ‘You are the only person who has really understood my play’ (n.pag).

Fifteen years later, it was Arundhati Nag who requested Neelam Mansingh to revive *Naga-Mandala* for a playwrights' festival in Bangalore. She was a bit hesitant about it because she wasn't sure if the play would still speak to her like it did several years ago but surprisingly, the play still appealed to her dramatic fancies and imagination. The first task, Neelam Mansingh did after her decision of revisiting the play was watching the video of the earlier performance. Her response to her earlier direction was of dissatisfaction and disapproval. In contrast to the earlier performance where melodrama and exaggerated imagery was focused, Neelam Mansingh in her fresh production gave her actors more freedom of expression and deliverance. The deployment of tools and methods has been changed and more delicacy and refinement is tried to deliver. Although the music and some of the actors in the play remained the same, it was re-created. She had brought in new experiences to the play and staged it very differently. *Naga-Mandala* was also performed later in *Desh Parva* festival in Sangeet Natak Akademi on Oct. 9, 2010. The Sangeet Natak Akademi - India's national academy for music, dance and drama - was the first National Academy of the arts set-up by the Republic of India.

Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry's key collaborations- Neelam Mansingh theatre has been shaped by three key collaborations. These three contributors include her favorite script-writer Surjit Patar, her music which is inspired by B.V Karanth and The Company. The Punjabi poet Surjit Patar has delivered her Indian as well as foreign originals into Punjabi and continues to do so. The music for her initial important productions was composed by B.V Karanth., her teacher and guide at the National school of Drama and later at Bharat Bhavan. Most of the productions by her group combine urban performers with members of the traditional Punjabi community of female impersonators, the *naqqals*. In Chowdhry's “ fusion theatre”, urban and rural , classic and folk, Indian and foreign and straight and queer elements meet on the robust common ground of the Punjabi language in a frenzy of music and dance “ that just grabs the audience,... and then before you know it, it's over” (“*Unpeeling the Layers within yourself*” 19). Samita Narula points out that in contrast to the current focus on realism,

naturalism, and the experimental in Indian Theatre, “there is an obvious theatricality to her productions which is eventually joyous celebration of existence. Her work is lyrical, earthy, yet mystically mythical” (“Restoring Lost Voices” 32).

Talking about Surjit Patar, he appeared on the Punjabi poetry scene in the sixties. As a well known Punjabi poet, his poetry marks profound intimacy and creative genius. *Hawa Vich Likhe Harf* (Words written in the Air), *Birkh Arz Kar* (Thus speaks the Tree), *Hanere Vich Sulghdi Varnmala* (Words smouldering in the Dark) and *Lafzanh Di Dargah* (Shrine of Words) are some of his works of poetry. He has penned down the tele-scripts starting from Punjabi poets Sheikh Farid of the 13th century to Amrita Pritam of the 20th under the name of *Suraj Da Sirmama*.

Neelam Mansingh’s comments regarding her relationship with Surjit Patar in *The Tribune*, reads as:

My relationship with Dr Surjit Patar is a story of collaboration and risk-taking, of jumping in the deep end. My meeting with Patar was fortuitous and defining. On a bleak winter evening I made my way into a studio theatre where a show of the play *Blood Wedding* by Federico Garcia Lorca was being performed. More than the production, I was transfixed by the luminous quality of the translation, the searing intensity of Lorca’s poetry travelling deep into the cultural, social and emotional landscape of Punjab. Patar had understood that in the theatre, language and words are never just verbal sounds but set up a whole range of propositions and possibilities. From the translation I could sense that Patar had a great feeling for the stage, and was in complete empathy with the hidden text, the silences, the shades and moods behind the words. The language in the play went to the heart of everything that I knew I was looking for.” (“Poet of the Pulse of Punjab”)

After such an instance both arranged a meeting and joined hands for their collaborated next ventures. He has translated works for The Company that range from classics like Federico Garcia Lorca’s, Jean Giradoux’s, Jean Racine’s, Girish

Karnad and Henrik Ibsen, to the dramatisation of short stories, by Doris Lessing, Can Themba and Rabindranath Tagore. The poems of Bertolt Brecht and Pablo Neruda has been translated into Punjabi by him and further worked on Giradoux, Euripides and Racine plays He has also written two original scripts based on ideas that were improvised and later structured and reassembled: *Kitchen Katha*, and *Sibo in Supermarket*.

Out of this long list of works, this particular research endeavour focuses on Neelam Mansingh's *Naga Chayya*, a Punjabi theatrical adaptation of *Naga-Mandala*. In the current age, adaptation of a literary text into different mediums is appreciated as an individual genre in academics. About theatre adaptations, they may be made from novels, short stories, plays, novellas, graphic novels, picture books and poems. In addition, other sources from which adaptations may be made are non-fiction books, essays, oral histories and true-life stories. F. Casetti, writes in the context of the significance of theatre adaptations, when a text is "recontextualised" in a theatre adaptation and produced on the stage then "the source text and its derivative occupies two different places in the world scene and history" (83). This explains how both the source script and the adapted theatre script become two different yet significant entities occupying individual space in the literary arena.

Following this basic knowledge about the activity of theatrical adaptation, the next step is to begin with the step by step comparative analysis by Sarah Cardwell and then mechanics of narrative by Gerard Genette. The comparative generic, authorial and medium –specific categorizations are followed similar to the last chapter's worksheet. Even the mechanics of the narrative follow the previous section terminologies of order, duration and frequency.

4.Comparative Analysis

4.a. Generic Context

Issues concerning theatre are endless; it may range from actors to spectators, text to production, language to creative presentation, signs and symbols to images but it is still impossible to cover all the issues regarding the theatre discipline without missing something or the other. An attempt has still been conducted to scrutinize the concerned

subject thoroughly. To begin with an important topic about the domain of theatre academics, i.e., genre context has been put under the lens for consideration. Before handling the generic issue, an analysis of the terms theatre and drama is important.

Paul Newell Campbell defines drama as, “Prose or Verse compositions intended for performance on the stage, plays” (53). Such a definition makes it very clear that works which are performed or planned to be performed are synonymous with “plays”. This also clears that drama is the raw material for theatre and includes poetry, essays, letters and many more categories. However it arises an oft-repeated question that with all the material in hand which form of depiction, drama (the written work) or theatre (the performed work), gets the title of the real and actual dramatic form. Hernadi focusing on the central issue writes:

I believe that a consistent logic of literature should either hold the view that dialogue plus staging constitute the finished product of dramatic art or else regard the entire written text(that is the fictive dialogue plus the authorial statements of the side text) as an integrated , albeit not homogeneous, verbal structure.(qtd in Campbell 53)

This argument is in contrast with the observation which Eric Bentley holds that consigns the choice to temperamental preference instead of the choice of the performance over the text suggested by Hernadi. Actually all such one-sided arguments are not lacking from loopholes and in the similar fashion the argument by of Eric Bentley is a self-contradictory one, tangled within its own threads. Although trying to be neutral in his statements his entire theory, somewhere just like Hernadi, gives his preference for the performing work. Reason behind such a choice may be because of the written texts incapacity to reach large strata of audience in comparison to the performing script. While when a drama gets ready to be performed on the stage it is obvious that it has won the hearts of the reading audience by its strong portrayals and is now ready to transmit the same on the stage. So because of many such reasons theatre or stage performance, in spite of some critical reviews, has been prominently placed a step forward by many critics with regard to the written dramatic text.

Moving a step forward, the concern of this section is certainly the analysis of the staged performance of *Naga-Chayya*. The discussion begins with the study of the generic context following the methodological criteria of the research work. There are many genres which the writers, directors and producers can employ to suit their tastes. This may include Comedy (Black Comedy, Comedy of Errors, Comedy of Situation, Farce , Romantic Comedy) Domestic Drama, Epic Theatre, Experimental theatre, Historical Theatre, Musical Theatre, Popular Theatre, Political Theatre, Radio Drama, Puppetry, Tragedy, Theatre of Absurd, Tragic Comedy and the list continue.

Coming to the analysis of this section, to apply Sarah Cardwell's line of thinking it requires first to identify whether the play adaptation belongs to a specific genre of theatre making. The level, to which the adaptation complies with familiar genre conventions, should permit the audience to draw results about the interpretive advances of both the script and the production. This is particularly applicable to the positioning of the stage adaptation of *Naga-Mandala* vis à vis the text of the play. Sarah Cardwell (2007) states that acceptance of the adaptation's "own agenda, its artistic choices, its emphasis and voice" ("Adaptation Studies Revisited: Purposes, Perspectives, and Inspiration" 55) require investigations into genre.

Following the trends worked out in the script of *Naga Chayya* it belongs to the genre of Epic theatre. In 1920 Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator came up with the term Epic theatre which was strongly different from the then in trend Dramatic theatre. Brecht considered that Dramatic theatre, which was traced back from Aristotle times, rendered theatre incapable of depicting larger realities beyond the imaginary world of the play. Further, the dramatic theatre saw its superlative versions in theatre of naturalism and poetic realism (Ibsen and Chekhov) which made the stage nothing less than a social laboratory. However, Brecht and Piscator believed that the naturalistic theatre failed in its objectives because its seeming objectivity was still integrated around the restricted perception of a single individual. In such a scenario, Brecht and Piscator tried to look for alternatives to such perspective, rejecting the three unities of the time and drawing inspiration from popular film, cabaret, circus, the music hall and puppet theatre.(Bertail 2)

Consequently, both Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator came up with the Epic theatre. Brecht explains the craft Epic theatre in “A Short Organum”:

As we cannot invite the audience to fling itself into the story as if it were a river and let itself be carried vaguely hither and thither, the individual episodes have to be knotted together in such a way that the knots are easily noticed. The episodes must not succeed one another indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgment. (qtd in Reinelt 9)

This is a critical Brechtian explanation of the art of the dramatic composition containing the basic underlying basis and the specifications for the epic theatre. The next requirement for epic dramaturgical is that of being associated with history plays. Apparently, all epic plays are history plays; it’s just that some deal with the contemporary historical moment and others with the past. To historicize the incidents of the account is an utmost important aspect of the epic writing, because it involves situating the events within a context that both explains them and yet is not obligatory. Janelle G Reinelt explanation about the historicizing in the epic play reads, “this necessity for historicization is applicable to both content and form. The story told must show, through social gestures, the sociopolitical formation underlying the interactions, while the method of telling must present a discontinuity and an opportunity for judgment.”(10)

Two other features of Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre are development of a specific acting style and the expectation of a certain kind of spectatorship. Bertolt Brecht informs that a triangular relationship maintains between the actor, the character and the spectator. It is like the actor is talking to the spectator about a third person, a character and so this makes the audience self-conscious and thoughtful about the whole issue. Bertolt Brecht always wanted his actors to strike a balance between being their character on stage and making the audience realize that a character is being performed on the stage. It also allows the spectators to indulge in their own scrutinizing caliber to maintain an emotional objectivity. According to Bertolt Brecht seducing the audience

into believing that they are watching a portion of a real life mars the critical acceptance of the societal values.

In context of all the above mentioned characteristics, the Punjabi script of *Naga Chayya* typifies appropriately as belonging to the genre of epic theatre.

Alienation effect-The play script is divided into four acts each displacing the previous one with a new narrative. The knots between the sequences are very loose and clearly visible. Indian dramatic conventions like Prologue, chorus, the seemingly unrelated comic episodes , the mixing of human and non-human world provide the proper setting for ‘complex seeing’ , the alienation effect. According to Girish Karnad these conventions, “permit the simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view, of alternative attitudes to the central problem” (Khatri and Arora 28).

This ‘complex seeing’ or suspension of meaning creation includes the technique of role shifting of characters employed by Neelam Mansingh. To begin with the Author in the narrative addresses the audience occasionally while changing his character in the narrative: from Author to Appanna and the Naga. All the three roles are strikingly performed by Vansh Bhardwaj but the technique of role and character shifting does not allow the spectators to emotionally connect to any particular role. Further the Story personified suspends the process of emotional identification or empathy on the part of the spectator and build up the suitable ambiance for intellectual stimulation which is truly non-cathartic and apparently non-Aristotelian in approach. . Even the character of Payal becomes initially the Story Personified and then is characterized in the role of the Rani. This change of role is a very apt skill employed by Neelam Mansingh to generate an epic generic context of the performance.

The usage of many songs and chorus further helps in suspending the normal flow of the dramatic action and develops in many additional themes in the narrative. Neelam Mansingh usage of live music in her dramaturgical profile of *Naga-Chayya* adds further characteristic to the epic genre of the narrative. Interrupting the sequence of the dramatic discourse, the musical score by *naqqals* and *bhands* add in their own musical interlude which disrupts the flow of the story and thus creates alienation effect.

Finally, ambiguous ending of the play further helps in discouraging the empathy in the drama. With regard to the endings prescribed by Karnad he has been most innovative and appears to be more Brechtian than Brecht himself. He was not content by simply suggesting a vague' ending; he rather suggested three possible endings and left every option open to the readers/spectators to decide on their own. In one of the endings, Karnad simply ends the tale by suggesting, "Rani lived happily ever after ..."(59). However on the demand of clarifications regarding 'Kappanna's disappearance'(60), the miserable life Appanna is condemned to lead, Rani's own 'anguish' and cobra's place in the whole state of affairs, in second ending Naga dies. In the third ending, Naga assumes the form of a tiny snake and enters Rani's tresses to remain there forever and when Rani discovers it, she too provides him a fair shelter there.

Out of these three endings, whereas the scriptural narrative of *Naga Chayya* by Surjit Patar offers all the three endings but in performance Neelam Mansingh opts the last ending on the stage. As this ending goes, Rani gives residence to Naga in her hair forever.

This ending is the most unnatural and impractical of all of the other endings as it can only be a fanciful idea that a woman can keep a living snake all the time in her tresses. It is only the second ending which is really capable of satisfying the audience. This awe of mystery and obscurity makes the ending ambiguous and thus heightens the level of alienation effect.

Violating the three-unities of time- Bertolt Brecht considered that the structure of the narrative and its dramaturgy should comply with one other in regards of stabilizing and adapting each other. But dramatic theatre never portrayed such a relationship and the three unities as a dramaturgy were too restrictive and unnatural to narrate the complexities of the life. Ding Yangzong summarizes Brecht's style of Epic theatre that, "he thought that the strength of the Epic theatre lies in its clear style and its open form which breaks the rigid stage conventions and mirrors modern life more freely and fully"(Anthony Tatlow, Tak-wai Wong 30). Accordingly, all the three unities of space, time and action are disparate in *Naga Chayya*. The first two acts are performed in the temple and then the Story personified starts narrating the story of Rani and audience are

transported into a brand new set-up of Rani's new house after marriage. Later in the story, very easily the set-up move to the village elder's *panchayat* area where the snake ordeal is performed. The story covers the time period of three and a half months which is conveniently narrated in ninety minutes of the stage performance. Further the action of the narrative is not restrictive; on the one hand it very easily becomes fast-paced covering the gap of fifteen days in a dialogue while on the other hand the narrative becomes so slow that the dream sequences of Rani are highly exaggerated.

Historical fantasy- The script of *Naga-Chayya* follows the criteria of history plays but not in the traditional sense of the term. Basically the text of a history play is based on a historical narrative but for Brecht the connotation of this term includes even categories of fantasies and folklore which becomes an individual sub-set category termed as historical fantasies. Actually Karnad while internalizing the spirit of Brechtian epic theatre developed his own variety of People's theatre. In this variety he contributed immensely through continuous experimentations and innovations with classical as well as folk forms including myths and legends. This led him to evolve a unique form entirely suitable for the Indian culture. Karnad prefers episodes from Indian mythology to question their morals and bearing in the contemporary context. Commenting on the utilizing of techniques of the classical and folk theatre of India in "Author's Introduction to Three Plays: *Naga-Mandala, Hayavadana, Tughlaq*", Girish Karnad himself 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." (14)

Disclosing the source of the story of the *Naga-Mandala*, Karnad notify the readers in his introduction to the "Three Plays" about a folk tale that he once heard from A.K Ramanujan. This folktale relates a Prince's distrust against women led him to avert him from loving women and this tale included almost forty versions of his love-desire encounters. The essential subject of all these tales has been, as Ramanujan remarks, "the narcissism" of the "self-involved hero", who endures a test assigned to him by his wife in order to survive. This emotional meagreness that this young Prince has been caught in obstructs him to grow in life thus causing severe lack of understanding and communication between him and any woman. Karnad very appropriately rises much

higher with this story about a male's difficulty to trust and love women and transforms it to be a story of every Indian women who suffers her husband indifference. It exposes the orthodox male chauvinist societal set-up and asserts for gender equality.

The above mentioned discussion clarifies that the play script of *Naga-Chayya* very appropriately follows the generic trends of the epic theatre. After this the next section concerns the analysis of the play script in regards to the Sarah Cardwell's authorial context.

4.b. Authorial Context

Sarah Cardwell's notion of authorial context helps in the pre-pone identification of a director's approach in writing of an adaptation. This might provide the audience with a familiar point of access for reception of the narrative. To some extent, it results in allowing them to avoid the hassle of interpreting the script of the adaptation and the performance in their own terms.

Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry, a connoisseur of Punjabi theatre, rests her techniques and style extensively in tradition. For her traditions and conventions do not relate to something of the past, which is dead and dreary, but to a very urban and refreshing culture. She prized tradition so much that her western productions also incorporated her love of vintage narrative methods, techniques and even ethnic songs. Basically, this passion of Neelam Mansingh rests in her intense love for her Punjabi regional culture. This high class devotee of Punjabi culture went to the extent of dealing with *truckwalas* and *dhabawals* to know more about the regional dialect and parlance without any feeling of shame and humiliation.

These generalizations simply make it easy for the audience's of *Naga-Chayya* to expect a cultural and down-to-earth performance. In addition to this, many other traditional narrative maneuvers ranging from: images, stage setting and music have been employed by Neelam Mansingh to embellish her performance. These are discussed as under.

Classic Theatrical Scenography – Scenography is the skill of crafting performance environments which vary considerably according to a director's personal style and

approach. In terms of Neelam Mansingh her dramaturgy includes heavy baggage of images, metaphors, traditional stage –settings which gives a classic appeal to her direction.

Factually, theatre conveys visual as well as textual implications to both its direct and indirect contributors: the creator, the artists and the audience. To accomplish this by preparing a vision, theatrical scenography crafts a visual metaphor of the text which means building of connections between the visual component as well as significations with the meanings of the text. ‘Visual metaphors’, according to Sofia Pantouvaki:

Function on many levels and in diverse ways, under different conditions: through images, scenography can convey information which cannot be otherwise transmitted; it can afford a glimpse of something which cannot be seen directly; it can also help us understand with our eyes what cannot be put in words. Under specific circumstances, a visual metaphor can become an illicit form of communication, a form of resistance based on images and visual means.(121)

In Neelam Mansingh’s *Naga-Chayya* there are many visual images which work as metaphors in the vocabulary of the stage play. The play begins with the *Ganesh* image broken in the temple, a metaphor symbolising something evil to pursue, this is followed by the Author repenting over his curse. The Flames are metaphors of village women who normally gather late in night to relate tales and sing songs. The two artists simultaneously portraying the role of Rani, Ramanjit Kaur and Payal, works as metaphorical attempt by Neelam Mansingh to uncover the different layering’s of Rani’s consciousness. Whereas one is seen involved in the mundane activities of the world, while the other, gets herself caught up in the fantasy world thus revealing the inherent desires and longings of Rani. Single artist Vansh Bhardwaj performs the role of Shama and then transforms into Naga metaphorically symbolizing the two personalities of a person, a narcissist and self-involved in the morning but a generous lover by night. In addition to this metaphors like dog, mirror and water pond have been used by the director with different symbolic intentions.

In addition to metaphors and images there are other important signifiers coming out of a director's ingenuity which add to the thematic interest of a staged performance. These may refer to the minutest and tiniest of stage detailing which gets significantly and purposefully incorporated within the stage construction. This includes concrete and abstract objects which contribute immensely in the transformation or change in the stage's scenic space. Semiotician, Anne Ubersfeld defines them:

Objects encompass far more than the stage properties; they also appear in textual stage directions and in spoken or written dialogue, either through direct reference or through imagery. On stage they may include a part of the set or even part of an actor's body. They pass from character to character, connect one scene to another, mark out certain frequencies and rhythms, and appear and disappear. (qtd in Bertail 22-23).

Neelam Mansingh's productions are best known for usage of spare props - fire, smoke, water, oil, sticks, washing poles and food — which creates an ambience of an Indian dwelling. Mostly stage directors find the usage of such props very messy and chaotic but for Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry these props help to make her plays come alive. For instance, later in the play *Naga Mandala*, Rani steps into a huge pond on the stage and splashes water with her foot, the action expressing the confusion in her mind. Similarly in her work *Little Eyolf* the actor is shown expressing his anguish by working up soap bubbles in a water tray.



Neelam Mansingh in an interview to Neha Bhatt remarks “Every artistic decision has to be practical too. So whatever I design is always easy to execute. In fact, everything in theatre comes from my role as a housewife. How do we use everyday things as metaphors? How do you seek beauty in something as mundane as washing?” (“The World’s a Stage”)

The best instance of this “housewife-like” approach set design could be seen in *Kitchen Katha*, a play Neelam Mansingh did a few years ago. Food and a woman’s relationship with cooking being the theme of the play, Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry had a real kitchen on stage. The audience could actually smell the coriander and the *anar* seeds being cooked, and hear the crackling sound of frying and the gurgling of water. The songs in the play were recipes, while the background music as the sounds of chutney being ground, food being churned in the *kadhai*, and the clunking of utensils being washed. Even in *Naga Chayya* there is a live kitchen where Rani spends most of her time, cooks food for Shama and it is also a place of retreat for her in her misery. In the beginning of the play the artists performing as Flames are seen enjoying noodles, drinking tea and talking casually. Further, Bishni also carries small Tiffin in which she initially carries her mid day meal of a *chappati* and later she gives Rani the magical roots from this Tiffin. All these are extra dialogic symbols created by Neelam Mansingh:

We have explored the sense of touch and sound on stage but never smell,” Mansingh says of her sets for *Kitchen Katha* design, confessing also that some of her own love of cooking spills over on the stage.

Mansingh conceives the sets herself, only taking the help of her sons, the younger of whom is an art director in Bollywood, for the execution.

“Children, of course, always render their help half-heartedly,” she laughs. (“The World’s a Stage”)

Fusion Theatre- It is not just the innovative set designs which has been the reason for Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry to become such an important figure in cotemporary Punjabi theatre. Far more significant is what she has contributed for Punjabi theatre, working with rural and urban actors, blending contemporary themes and even a few

words of English, with traditional and cultural set-up. This trend of hers makes her one among the foremost proponents of fusion theatre in Punjab. Her works are complete world in themselves having a slice of every aspect of life covering: comedy to tragedy, music to monotonous silence and romance to violent aggression. All such straight and queer ingredients collaborate on the vigorous common ground of the Punjabi dialect.

Samita Narula opines regarding the theatrical trends of Neelam Mansingh, “There is an obvious theatricality to her productions which are, eventually, joyous celebrations of existence. Her work is lyrical, earthy, yet mystically mythical” (qtd in Dharwadker, *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance in India since 1947* ..118). Her fusion world of theatrical dramaturgy is not only restricted to her stage performances multicultural display but even the reception of Neelam Mansingh’s work calls for multicultural appreciation. She has been loved and liked by huge variety of audience. She has performed all over in Punjab-Jalandhar, Amritsar, Patiala and Chandigarh, her hometown, the craze for her productions is immense. Her fusion theatre is appreciated even at international level. Her works have been successfully staged in London, Singapore, Dubai, Japan and Germany.

Talking about *Naga-Chayya*, the play typifies as an example of Neelam Mansingh’s Fusion theatre. The play is performed by both rural and urban actors, the traditional *bhands* and *naqqal* performers are visible playing live music on the stage while city based artists like Vishal Bhardwaj and Ramanjit Kaur take the centre stage. There is proper coordination and balance between all the artists in spite of their difference in cultural background. Further, the theme of the narrative, not only portray the picture of a traditional, stereotypical housewife but also highlights a very modern theme concerning the real strength of human desires which enables a simple innocent girl, in state of unhappiness, to stampede the Indian patriarchal set-up. Rani, in the story is so miserable and unhappy with her married life that to console her inner passions she creates a fantasy world. The power of these illusions becomes so strong that it brings a drastic change in her real life and she moves from a dejected and overlooked wife to a powerful persona of a goddess.

Neelam Mansingh has used some unusual props which strangely add a contemporary and modern feel to the otherwise traditional set-up of the story. For instance, the male impersonators personifying Flames enter the temple in wheelbarrows, for a regular chit-chat and very strangely in such an antique setting, audience watch them eating noodles, which by-the way is a fast-food of the modern age. The erotic scenes between Rani and the Naga are far-fetched and too much to suit such an old set-up of the story. Apparently, they are styled and performed for modern audiences.

Music- Neelam Mansingh usage of live music in her dramaturgical profile is a characteristic method employed by her for her standardized authorial intrusion. According to Joe Deer and Rocco Dal Vera, “Whether we call it catharsis , escape or just a desire for entertainment and emotional engagement , the musical theatre can take an audience to places that few other experiences can claim” (1). Similarly, in theatricals of Neelam Mansingh, poetry and music work out as conjoined configurations in increasing the essence of the each other. While the poetry in *Naga Chayya* is all about Surjit Patar’s depiction of Rani’s pain, whereas, the term music is employed here in the widest possible sense, as an auditory event- vocal, instrumental, sound effect, i.e., everything audible on the stage includes in it.

Music is semantic and nonfigurative; unlike words it is not capable of literally depicting anything. However, when put within a performance it radiates and thus effects the overall perception. It is however difficult to situate meaning in music but when aptly created rather provides an atmosphere where the theatrical space becomes vulnerable enough to suggest anything desirable.

In a performance, music certainly holds an utterly unique status. As Wagner said, “Whereas other art forms say it *means*, music say *it is*” (qtd in Pavis 140). Music has never any particular object; rather its value is measured in terms of the effect it produces. Neelam Mansingh’s usage of very traditional and earthy music initially makes the audience very comfortable creating a home-like situation. Nothing seems out of their interest point that is foreign or alien. The tunes of *dhol*, *harmonium* (*reed,organ*), *chimta*, *tumbi*, *gubgubi* (a small drum, open from one side ,with a string that is strummed), and *matka* (a metal pot idiophone) seem very familiar to the

audience. It already situates them in an easy position to suitably gist out the performance.

The choice of Neelam Mansingh for live musicians helps in providing the Bertolt Brecht detached epic nature to the performance. The musicians sharing the stage with the actors certainly leave the audience focus to shift from actor's performance towards the musicians. Thus the music at one level strengthens the quality of the performance but lowers the reception element of the performance by the audience. Just like western performances, especially in classical productions, where music's effect is that of accompaniment, Neelam Mansingh's musical aids also help in indirectly bringing out the inherent themes in the performance.

Music on the stage of *Naga Chayya* helps to locate the action and make a situation recognizable. It also acts as a form of punctuation for a scene, particularly during pauses in acting and scene changes. For instance when the author's story shifts to the tale of Rani or when the character of Naga appears there is assistance of musicals. (Patrice Pavis 142-145)

At other times, music in the performance helps in unfolding the deep inner emotions and feelings rested in the hearts of the characters. Surjit Patar has left no stone unturned to articulate the agony of Rani's heart by crafting into beautiful musicals. The starting description when the character of Rani is introduced is in the form of a *boli*. When the story introduces Rani, a style called *baint* (form of a *Heer*) is used:

ਇੱਕ ਸੀ ਕੁੜੀ ਜਵਾਨ ਜਹਾਨ ਲੋਕੋ, ਉਹਦਾ ਭਲਾ ਜਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਸੀ ਨਾਮ ਕੋਈ,
ਸੋਹੇਨ ਮੋਹਨ ਰੱਖੋ, ਕਿਸ਼ਨ ਬਿਸ਼ਨ ਰੱਖੋ, ਜੀਤ ਮੀਤ ਰੱਖੋ, ਰਾਮ ਸ਼ਿਆਮ ਰੱਖੋ
(Chowdhry, "Naga-Chayya" 9)¹.

Rani is described as a young beautiful girl whose parents are finding a suitable match for her. Next, Surjit Patar has used another *Heer* to describe the pain and grief of a newly wedded girl who holds her parents responsible for her miserable state. Her anklets are compared to prison chains, her bangles to handcuffs and her house to a

¹ The subsequent references from the text have been cited with page numbers written in parenthesis.

prison. According to Surjit Patar lonely in her house Rani recalls her father and mother through usage of painful *vain* and *ahlaniya*. There are typical tunes for sad dirges which include slow dragging chants punctuated by shrill and wailing cries. In the translated script, Surjit Patar incorporates his lyrical excerpts to the height of his creative potential. He thinks with his whole being, resulting that every fiber is attuned to the symphony that emanates from the interplay of emotions. For him it is not the word that matters but its tone and tenor that imparts it, its unique identity. In his hands, words become pliable and the overall effect is that of ecstatic feelings, subliminal undertones and the Keatsian “teasing us out of thought as doth eternity.”(Ode on Grecian Urn) He loves words for their sounds but their meanings he understands in the stillness of his mind.

4.c.Theatrical Context (Medium-Specificity)

The defining characteristic of theatre is the actual performance, which includes the physicality of an artist in real time inhabiting space embodying different characters with distinctive appearances and distinctive voices. This locates ingrained signification in an artist’s gestures, appearances, voice and costume. Each is not without certain implication and significance.

Regarding, *Naga Chayya*, the play had its casting before it was written. The casting decisions were made on the quality and range of the actors’ singing voices, on their flexibility in being able to play a number of roles and their adaptability in working with a new script.

Actors

The most visible aspect of the theatre are the actors and their acting. For a successful performance the performer must perceive the spirit of the character and portray the same on the stage. For being original and honest on the stage, the actors have to be purely synthetic, imbibing at once different emotions: happiness, sadness, romantic or aggressive.

Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry’s, lobby of actors, “The Company”, has been in existence since 1984 and is renowned at both national and international levels. Her

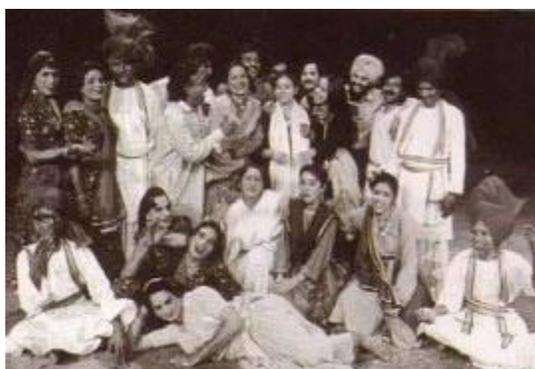
acting workshop follows the standards of Brechtian dramatic theory. Bertolt Brecht considered that, the real physical self of the performer and fictional self of the character belong to two distinct yet interweaving sign systems. Epic theatre instead of trying to combine them seamlessly into one strongly marks their separateness so that the artist's body never withdraws. This trend is what Ariane Mnouchkine explains, "writing with the body: the actors "write" the story through their movements, gestures, and placements in relation to each other on stage, not as a smooth inexorable *flow* but with every moment marked off ideologically"(qtd in Bertail 23)

Neelam Mansingh forwards the criterion of Bertolt Brecht epic theatre's acting semiotics to her artists. In this context her actors are finely skilled in their knowledge regarding where to restrict themselves from going over the top with their emotions and sentiments. They do this to create a suitable atmosphere of alienation effect where the spectators can focus more upon the story than their acting. This is high calibre that they spare their acting skills for the sake of the reactions to the story.

Her company is group of performers which backgrounds both as city dwellers as well as crude villagers. From foreign performers, NSD trainees to traditional *bhanda*s and *dhadies* everyone with strong stage dramatics are part of her The Company. In spite of such difference in their styles, Neelam Mansingh constantly gives a proper freedom to them, to individually understand and perform a particular role. However, it is always her actors with their strong personal style statements which make a mark on the psyche of the spectators than the characters of the narrative. Vishal Bhardwaj though performs brilliantly as Shama and the Naga but without doubt it is the actor himself who steals away the show more than the character. Audience would love to see Vishal Bhardwaj again and again even if the role changes to yet another narrative.

Neelam Mansingh's, 'The Company' is house for the traditional *naqqal* performers. More than their roles or characters in the script they are deployed for providing powerful live music on the stage. Their traditional instruments are fascinating and give a strong feel to the script. These performers break the continuous flow of the script at regular intervals by their lyrical documentaries and thus help in maintaining an alienation effect.

Traditional Naqqal Performers -Many performers of The Company belong to a group of traditional *naqqals* (female impersonators) who have had a long tradition of performance. Traditionally the *naqqals*(originated from a Persian word , “ to imitate”), also known as *bhands* (“Jokers”), are rural nomadic performers in Punjab. They have a vast catalogue of traditional songs and ballads and a formidable ability to invent on, and satirize any situation they are put in.



Neelam Mansingh explains much about the tradition of *naqqal* performance in her research project she completed in 2009 from Punjab University Chandigarh. She while mentioning the basics of this skill reveals that the *naqqal* performance pursues an arrangement that starts with two actors who, through a sequence of gags and improvisations, make ironic remarks on government and the public. This facet of the recital is regularly episodic by four to five female impersonators who first join in dancing with their backs towards the audience and who show their faces only after testing the viewers’ curiosity and anxiety to the limit. This is then followed by a hilarious and impressive encounter between the two male actors and the female impersonators, with most of the conversation banking on twofold meanings that border on being critically risqué.

Neelam Mansingh’s research project further discloses the intricacies of this trend. She explains that this continuous jousting is frequently pursued by a large amount of ribaldry and rough hilarity that at times can slide down into vulgarity. Subsequently, there is a sensual dance with many thrusts and wriggles to the tunes of musical instruments. The manner of dance looks like the whirling movements from the typical *kathak*. After this comes another sensual song sung usually in *rāg Malkauns* or *Darbari*.

This is then trailed by the performance of the story, which is usually taken from popular Punjabi folk tales e.g. *Hir-Ranjha*, *Sohni-Mahiwal*, or *Puran Bhagat*. The dancing and the narrative are combined with comic interludes handled by a comic artist who symbolize the common man. In this way these artists function as both societal critics as well as entertainers.

Primarily, when Neelam Mansingh first came across the *naqqals* on her arrival in Chandigarh, she tried to gather from their loaded traditions and elaborate patterns of misplaced talents to find methods of dramatic expression that could append to her understanding of regional whims and fancies. However, Neelam Mansingh felt that the cultural baggage these entertainers were carrying was so huge that she made them part of her team. Since then, they have been working together with the urban actors for over two decades.

The *naqqal* performers in the *Naga Chayya* first appear as the Flames impersonating village women in the temple. Actually, it is difficult to make out if there is any actual woman personified as Flames because all the *naqqal* and *bhand* actors are mainly males. They are all wearing long gowns and hold lantern in their hands. They sit back relaxed, take out their food items and starts to eat. They discuss moralistic tales of human community in forms of rustic verse musical score. They are interrupted with the arrival of the Author in the temple. After this they with the Author are audience to the entire story of Rani narrated by the Story personified as a beautiful girl. During the story they interrupt timely with their musical Punjabi scores (Chorus) with their traditional instruments of *tumbis* and *vinnies*.

Urban Actors- Neelam Mansingh's urban actors are replete with immense talent and devotion and they bring to their performances a reputation as Neelam Man's actors – whose repertoires, performance style and public identity link them firmly to her theatre.

The cast includes Ramanjit kaur who in her character of Rani is at her emotive excellence. Ramanjit was just sixteen when she created a sensation in her very first emergence on stage in 1989 with her performance of *Naga-Mandala* in Punjabi language. In that performance also she played the complex character of Rani, a brutalised bride who fills her isolation with fiction and fancies. Ramanjit has since then

been an integral part of Neelam Mansingh's team and has played stellar roles in Lorca's *Yerma*, Jean Giradoux's *The Madwoman of Chaillet*, Racine's Phaedra, *Kitchen Katha*, based on Laura Esquivel's *Like water for Hot Chocolate* among other plays, all directed by Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry for the Chandigarh-based 'The Company'.

Ramanjit Kaur reprised her role of Rani after two decades on the day she received the prestigious Sanskriti award for Theatre, 2007. The new Rani gained in maturity of talent what she lost in playful innocence. This year saw her enact excerpts from *Sibo in the Supermarket*, an exceedingly physical performance, on the occasion of the Sangeet Natak Akademi's Yuva Puraskar. Kaur has worked with the famed Ariane Mnouchkin in Paris, and participated in several international workshops and productions

Ramanjit Kaur has been a workshop consultant for over a decade, having received workshop training from India, France and UK. She is an internationally prominent theatre practitioner and film actor. She has performed in most National and International Theatre Festivals as well as Deepa Mehta's *Fire* and *Videsh- Heaven on Earth*. Her many Awards include Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Sanskriti Award, French Embassy Award and Charles Wallace India Trust Award.

The performance of Vansh Bhardwaj in *Naga Chayya* is brilliant and his transition from an abusive husband into a Naga impersonating Rani's husband is equally believable. Not just his demeanour but even his eyes become a lethal weapon in his startling performance. Deepa Mehta while casting him for her film *Videsh* expressed in an interview to Preeti Thandi that, "because he comes from the theatre so he has the discipline. The method of working is very internal; he goes right into the character with such depth." ("HEAVEN ON EARTH Premieres")

The role of Rani is also performed by another artist named Payal, a young, beautiful and vibrant performer. Old Bishni is performed by experienced yet spirited Gick Grewal. Including them, The Company is a repository of many other refined and well-trained artists who have been constant participants to Neelam Mansingh's directions.

Appearances- In Neelam Mansingh's first direction of *Naga-Mandala* in 1989, the acting never came up to the final benchmark. The hero, although played by the consummate actor Vajinder Kumar, remained unrealized both as abusive husband and as Naga lover. In the former *avatar* he is only irritating, in the latter too innocuous. As the Naga is rendered fangless, the risk of Rani hurtling down the abyss of desire is minimized to the extent that the audience doesn't ever perceive it in a real danger.

Explaining her second direction of *Naga-Mandala*, as *Naga-Chayya*, she says even that though *Naga-Mandala* is a well-made play with a tight structure, the plot is such that it allows you to decode events in such a way that the meanings and ideas can emerge from outside the play. She says in this sense *Naga-Mandala* was a great play to revisit as it was a challenge to evolve the story. Neelam Mansingh said, however it presented its own difficulties. The major difficulty included that more than half the cast that performed this time helped to produce the play in 1989. So Neelam Mansingh had to spend a lot of time trying to make them get rid of their past memories and rework the characters, emotions and relationships.

While preparing for *Naga Chayya* the rehearsal process started by doing a series of improvisation from the play but without the text. The entire exercise was to nudge the actors into taking risk, sloughing of fixed approaches, pushing them into developing their own acting vocabulary. Certain challenging things happened during rehearsals, which Neelam tried to hold on to, with the hope that the spontaneous recklessness that happened does not get lost in a structured performance.

While choreographing the chorus of flames, she wanted them to have the energy of women who are set free after hours of gruelling work. Transforming into a bunch of raucous, gossipy women, they meet in the middle of the night, drinking tea and munching biscuits, while spewing out salacious scandals about the homes that they light up. During the rehearsal period of her second performance Neelam felt that just as the character of the husband is split into two-the brutal husband during the day and metamorphosing into a divine lover at night, she wanted to give a similar metaphysical layering to the character of Rani. She did this by not *marking* the actors by the character they are playing; -the writer becomes the husband who becomes the Naga.

The Story becomes the beautiful woman, who then becomes the wife. This constant shifting of the character was an attempt to plumb the complex and dense ideas of the play.



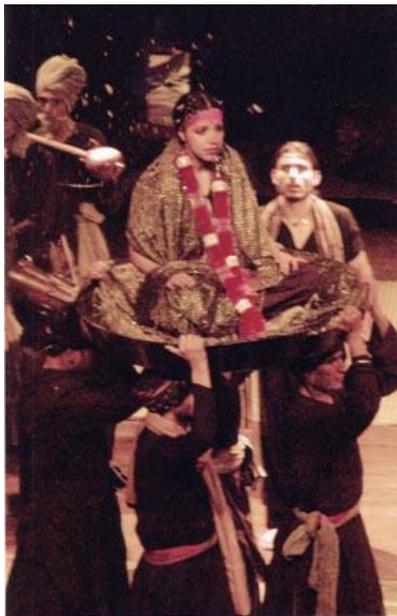
In the scene there are two Rani's visible, one is busy in front of the mirror pinning her hair into a beautiful hairstyle. The other Rani is playing with the puppets dressed as bride and groom. The first Rani is Ramanjit Kaur and in most scenes she is given the part of performing the everyday mundane household jobs of the character and the second Rani, performed by artist Payal is mostly busy in day dreaming. It's not that Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry fixed the character's role in one single artist's performance; there is constant shifting between Ramanjit and Payal for Rani's character.



In this scene artist Payal is shown in conversation with Bishni and artist Ramanjit Kaur is busy dreaming near the make-believe pond. This suggests there is no fixed marking of the characters in the direction and there is constant role shifting among artists.

The Story (a character) conceived in the form of a beautiful woman, was conceptually and dramatically challenging. As the Story unfolds the story of Rani (to the chorus of flames) she also becomes the character that she is creating. Rani the protagonist lives in two worlds- the everyday world of washing and cooking, and the world of her imagination. This recognition of the 'other' was extended theatrically by having the 'inner' Rani and the 'outer' Rani played by two actors which becomes an important thematic motif in Neelam Mansingh's script. There was no neat division of action or text, between the actors playing the two Rani's'. The varied dimensions through which Rani traversed was resolved by having two Rani's', sometimes they appear side by side as each other's mirror images, and at times set against each other in contrasting tensions.

The director's feminist sensibility is evident throughout the direction, which finally becomes the theme of her yet another production. The rejected wife and the beloved of the Naga (Rani) finally triumphs over both her husband and the Naga-lover by ultimately being anointed as a goddess by the villagers. Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry's women are brilliantly strong and off lust and deceit and difficult to subdue.



Rani performed by Ramanjit Kaur and Payal is costumed with black top and long earthy skirts and has long tresses. Vansh Bhardwaj is costumed in a long gown and his transformation into the Naga is depicted by a long shimmering dotted cloth which he stalls around his neck. Through its sustained fairy-tale magic, the child-like suspension of disbelief it projected on to the audience, the performance turned out to be successful. A lotus pond, carpets of dried leaves, snakey paintings on trunks make this half-realistic and half-fantasy, by which comes alive brilliantly subsisted by Pamela Singh's singing soulfully the lyrics contributed by Surjit Patar.

Gestures-Gestures are complimentary to the beauty of the play and they mostly come as an important ingredient in the whole panorama of an artist's performance. Gesture's are part of an artist's superior skill which is mostly absent in the written text. The play begins with the Author in the temple; who is seen walking with a torch in his hand, then he lights a fire and sits in front of it. In his attempt to stay awake he is seen running and jumping on the stage and while describing his problematic situation to the audience, he folds his hands as if praying to God. Further he even takes off his clothes and sits in the tub of water to stay active. While seeing the Flames arriving he hides in one corner of the stage. The gestures of Vansh Bhardwaj in the character of the Author are admirable. At instances, they add a bit of humor to otherwise serious story, for example, when the Story appears on the stage as a female, the Author in excitement picks her up which creates a few giggles in the audience. At other times Vansh Bhardwaj is aggressive and feisty as Shama and cool and composed as the Naga lover.

The performance of Rani by Ramanjit Kaur and Payal owes much credit to their facial and body gestures for adding more dramatic charm to the character. Her youth personified by her elegant walk, long black tresses and fiery movements explains much about her being in the youthful sensitive period of her age, where emotions of love and lust are meant to overpower. Both Ramanjit Kaur and Payal are exceptionally excellent in their performance. They successfully add befitting expressions of youth, charm, vigor and sensitivity to the character. In addition, while performing such a miserable character of Rani these performers still manage to provide a bit of humor to the otherwise tense script. The scene where Ramanjit as Rani gets scared on the abrupt entry of Naga incarnated as Shama during night and hastily jumps into the trunk is humorous. Seconds

after this humorous scene, a very seductive and romantic scene follows where the actors carry out in a highly breathtaking style. Actors Vansh Bhardwaj and Ramanjit perform passionately and some physical lifts are also added to the love scene. The scene when artist Payal enters the little make-believe lotus pond on the stage which symbolizes Rani's entering into the world of love and passion is beautiful. In the end when Rani proves her innocence by holding the Naga (symbolized by sequined cloth) everyone chants her name as goddess and picks her up in a basket on their head. Ramanjit as Rani has her hair open and wears a red *tilak* on her head, her appearance looks exactly like a goddess incarnate. The entire scene is well performed.

Old Bishni, performed by Gick Grewal, is an old, blind and handicapped woman who is helped by her son to move from here and there. The hilarious actions of Gick Grewal's add humor to the performance. She is seen climbed on the back of her son, which seems a bit awkward. Her son in fright thinking that they have been caught while sneaking inside Shama's house grabs her wrist and drags her on the floor clumsily.

All the performers delineate their performances with suitably suggestive movements : sitting and listening position of Rani near the window, Sham coming into the house and going from the house after locking, Rani preparing food, Bishni's arrival near the window , Shama's manhandling Rani and many more.

In Rani's monologue which describes her dreams, she assumes a very still and visionary position. Signs of intense concentration are further encoded in the taut muscles of her face. Particular emotional responses are located chiefly in facial expressions created by flickering of the eyes and trembling of the lips. These are accentuated by the relative stillness of the whole body and center lighting. On the contrary, Shama's performance draws more heavily on gestures which function as attitudinal markers like anger, hate, and disgust and as Naga, love and passion. The spectators are offered a series of gestural codes which visually mark the performer's change in attitude, emotional state and so on.

Voice- The speaking skills of a person explain his/her personality and position to a great extent. The effect of circumstances and surrounding bears a major role in this context. For instance, in the stage performance, Rani's speech spectrum begins from having a

low-profile, meek and submissive voice to a very firm and confident vocals towards the climax. In contrast, her husband, Shama begins from a boisterous and loud speech but becomes completely mum and hesitating in his utterance towards the end. Basically Rani towards the start of the story is a shy, timid girl and so accordingly her speech traits show no signs of power or impact. Toward the end she is proclaimed as a goddess, an act which automatically arises within her addresses the audacity and vigour. In contrast Shama changes from an indifferent and aggressive husband to a devotee of his goddess wife so naturally his speech starts from being malicious to loving. The speaking voices of Rani and Shama from the start of the story till its culmination alter completely and suggest that performance offers a set of auditive signs generated by the actor which establishes speaker-listener/ listener-speaker interchange.

The live music provided by Neelam Man in her work gives the performance its unique style. The shift in her stance has everything to do with the demise of the legendary B.V. Karanth who enriched all her productions with “earthy strains”. In an interview with Jangveer Singh she confesses that, “Now that he is no more, I cannot get myself to indulge heavily in music,” says the director (“A Play is Like a Living Thing”). In its final form, the play has what can be called “functional” music which leads the script forward rather than carving a zone of its own. As for production, the play has been superbly structured with a familiar cast which offers Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry the comfort level she demands as a director.

5. Mechanics of Narrative

Following the thought plan of this research process, the next step towards analysis is mechanics of narrative by Gerard Genette. Very appropriately all the three categories of order, duration and frequency are studied in context to the script of *Naga Chayya*.

5.a. Order

“Order”, as mentioned in previous section is usually referred to the sequence of events, or the plot. In *Naga Chayya* the main story of the play remains the same however the milieu and the language changes from Kannad background to Punjabi. In *Naga Chayya*, the main story is encapsulated within a meta-narrative of a male story

teller and his artistic anxieties. The Flames, which are created as incarnations of gossipy village women, are an incidental audience for the story as they unfold themselves. Along with the female Story (character), they signify a tradition of women's story telling: one of bonding through narratives. This is followed by an account about how the female Story gets her origin and she finally narrates the tale of Rani. So the order of narrative remains pretty much the same as the in the textual narrative of *Naga-Mandala*.

The difference and the difficulty arise when it comes to depiction of analepses and prolepses sections (flashbacks and flash forwards) of the textual script getting realized through stage performance. The point of difficulty is that whereas the text has the benefit of an author interrupting the text with his views (authorial intrusion) but this is not possible in a stage performance. On stage these authorial intrusions get their medium only through an artist's skilled gestures, acting skills or stage lighting. For instance, Rani's dream monologues with single white light darting on her face in the dark stage explain her loneliness and distress extensively. But it is impossible to create the images of stag and prince which she visualizes in the textual version of *Naga-Mandala*. So whenever Rani is alone and fantasizing, it is only for the audiences to understand from her gestures but what is really going in her mind is inexplicable. It is not to say that theatrical performance lack somewhere because of this hindrance but it is helped in through its expertise physical connotations of the performers. The visibility of sadness and misery on Rani's face in Ramanjit Kaur and Payal is not possible in textual version which gives stage performance its own distinctiveness to display human emotions.

The other differences in the structural order include two additions done to the scriptural order of *Naga- Chayya*. Firstly, Surjit Patar adds on to the plot his lyrical verses and thus provides a deep meaningful and rustic voice to the pain and misery of Rani. He presents varied representations of Rani's conflict wherein Rani undergoes acute suffering but she has no recourse that may deliver her from this dilemma. His beautiful compositions depict the problems existentially faced by the sensitive self full of romantic illusion and immersed in the world of reality. His search split between the imagination and the real becomes apparent. Rani's conflict of mind and heart has been presented through various dimensions and unravelled with much sensitivity and

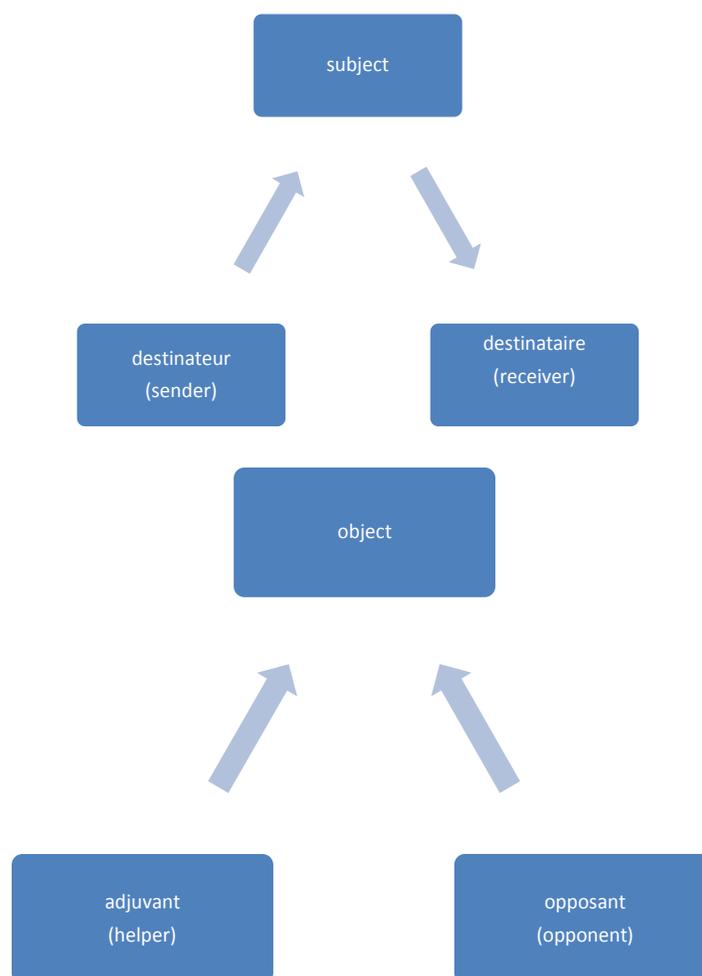
sobriety. Secondly, in the text of *Naga-Mandala*, Girish Karnad has provided two endings to the story but Neelam Mansingh alters this in her Punjabi scripts. In the 1990 production Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry used the first ending and while in the second production in 2007 she used the second ending of the play.

In addition to these two major changes spotted in the Punjabi script, it is rather more beneficial to study the order within theatrical characters and within the dialogues for further understanding.

Order of Character

The Greek term *kharakter*, according to Elaine Aston and George Savona, implies three major and correlated sets of meanings – “(1) the literal sense of that which is cut in or marked; (2) the metaphorical sense of the mark impressed on a person or a thing ;(3) a likeness, image or exact representation. Its transliteration is first used in English to denote ‘a personality in a novel or a play’ ”(34) .

In context of the usage of semiotic methodology to character, a significant inheritance from the early on structuralist and formalist approaches has been the conception of the different roles of character. The basis for this theory originated from the study done by Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp on the fairy tales. His work impressed many theorists but A.J.Greimas was one such prominent structuralist who successfully furthered his study. A.J.Greimas was also influenced by Etienne Souriau, a dramatic theorist and his calculation of six roles disposed for character performance. It was his writings on semantics and the structures of meaning which helped A.J. Greimas to successfully come up with the theory of actantial model, which stands as one of the probable principles of the organization of the universe of semantics. The application of actantial model to theatrical texts provides an informative technique of discovering the primary grammar of a play’s structure.(Aston and Savona 36)



Actantial model: Greimas (Elaine Aston and George Savona 37)

This model by Greimas clearly explains the various roles the character executes during the performance. The sender is a power or being which operates on the subject thereby starting the subject's search for the object in the welfare of the receiver, to which end the subject is either aided or opposed. For instance, in the case of a love-quest, the subject (hero) tries to win over the object (heroine) under the impact of Eros (love). The hero is aided by confidants or servant-type figures and opposed by parental assemblages. In a love quest model the subject is also the receiver; that is, motivated by love, the hero acts in his own interests. This assigning of character roles help in understanding the basic traits of a character beforehand. A subject is meant to be needy while the object remains hard to attain, the point of arousal, which helps in building up the story. With the flow of the narrative arise the confidants which help in smooth flow

of the story while the opponents help in creating catastrophe which is finally resolved toward the end.

Applying the actantial model upon the characters in the script of *Naga Chayya*, Rani being acting on her quest to win her husband acts as a subject while Shama, her husband, is symbolised as an object. She is helped by Naga, Bishni and his son in this process. The opponents in this process may be Shama's mistress and the Village elders who restrict Rani from getting what she wanted. In the text by Karnad and in the translated Punjabi script by Surjit Patar the model continues to be the same. The names of the characters and the milieu and the setting of the story have been changed.

Neelam Mansingh strikes at the distinctness of gender creation by marking the order of characterization in a unique manner. While in the text of *Naga Mandala*, there is no instance where characters merge or overlap but in the staging of the Punjabi play, *Naga-Chayya*, many such overlapping performances are visible. Single actor, Vansh Bhardwaj initially plays the role of the Author than he shifts to the character of Shama and finally both the roles of the Naga and Shama are performed by him. The character of Rani is performed simultaneously by two artists, Payal and Ramanjit whereas the audience could notice Payal initially playing the role of the Story on the stage. Such an issue of overlapping or double role is significant in the productions by Neelam Mansingh. But the height of competence among Neelam Mansingh theatre artists is of such great magnitude, that they shine in every role given to them.

Order within Dialogue

After the arrangement of order among characters, the dramatic stage seeks order within dialogue. Usually it is the task of dialogue in dramatic narratives to maintain the exactness of the character, space and action. Mostly, in its regular form, dialogue is structured as a turn taking coordinating activity. This activity normally conducts when one character talks to another who listens and then answers back; in turn becoming the speaker and this interactive duality of the speaker- listener role is a basic form of dramatic dialogue. According to K.Elam, "what allows the dialogue to create an interpersonal dialectic... within the time and location of discourse is the deixis" (139). Deixis, exactly pointing is the method by which the I-You interactions are built;

personal and demonstrative pronouns (I, You, This ,That) and ‘ deictic adverbials’ (here, now) are used by the speakers to point to themselves, to others and to their context, in the process of communication. According to K. Elam precisely, a drama consists in “I addressing a *you here and now*” (139). (Aston and Savona 52)

It is through this deictic trading of dialogues that the dramatic existence achieves its three- dimensionality and as such the inherent importance of every single bit of performance gets significance. The speaker- listeners point not only to the actual or mimetic world but to invisible and hidden characters, events or spaces, making them part of the imaginary universe through indication.

Besides the use of *deixis* ascertaining the speakers and their space even the sequencing of utterances is also essential to the action. Conventionally, action in drama has only been regarded in terms of outer action, but semioticians have tried to illustrate the usage of language in making up the form of action. The three levels of speech as action, which need concern, are the locutionary (uttering a sentence that makes sense), the illocutionary (the act performed in speaking the sentence, e.g. making a request or promise) and the perlocutionary (the effect on addressee). By taking into consideration these three levels of speech in dialogue deliverance an attempt has been fore grounded to show how the linguistic sign system of the dramatic text actively points to the characters and world of the dramatic universe in the *here and now* and thus functions as the means of creating action through speech.

While taking up the meeting scene between Bishni and Rani from the script of the play an analysis of the dialogue deliverance has been undertaken. The deictic nature of the ‘I-You’(demonstrative pronouns) exchanges between two characters is immediately apparent, as is the ‘here and now’(deictic adverbials) spatial context. As it is the ‘here and now’ conditions of the space which constitute the main topic of conversation, they are frequently pointed to in the dialogue and it is Bishni who is taking stock of the whole spatial condition and does most of the pointing; Further considering the dialogue in relation to the notion of speech as action, Bishni’s dominating both spatial and social context is apparent. It is Bishni who does all the questioning and the explaining. The warmth and familiarity of Bishni does not elicit the

called for response from Rani. Rani observes the rule of polite behavior by replying appropriately but accompanies it with silent sobbing. This response of Rani provides unsaid answers to Bishni's queries. Rani's discontent with her space continues to manifest itself in a series of speech acts where her sorrowful state becomes more apparent:

ਬਿਸ਼ਨੀ: ਤੇ ਤੂੰ ਸਾਰਾ ਦਿਨ ਕੱਲੀ ਘਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਾਂ ਅਡਾਉਂਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦੀ ਹੈਂ ।

ਰਾਣੀ ਨੁਸਕਣ ਲੱਗ ਪੈਂਦੀ ਹੈ। (15)

This appears at one level to be a simple utterance not demanding any response. However, it exerts an illocutionary force, being a request for something to be done and further produces a perlocutionary effect: Rani starts crying over her sad plight. Bishni request her to stop and indirectly ensures changing her situation into a happy one. The illocutionary force of her requests, whether direct or indirect place her in the position of authority. Her dominance or superior status of holding some magic wand by which she can change the present situation is therefore constructed through the conversation. Hence when Bishni gives Rani the solution to her problem in the form of magical root, she has no choice to deny but to accept the old lady's offer. The narration of her personal story affected by the power of magical roots, thereby demonstrate dialogue's ability to extend boundaries of the fictional universe.

There can be many other dialogues culled out from the script for analysis which will easily create action through speech. When the Author promises the Story to further recount the story of Rani, the request of the Naga to Rani for not to reveal her pregnancy to anyone are some more incidents which can be analysed by locating all the three levels of speech. However this endeavour restricts only to the above mentioned instance.

5.b. Duration

On the stage it is important to have a suitable connectivity between the stage performances and the duration of the story, therefore the story is always encapsulated into three to five acts of staging. The discourse time of *Naga Chayya* on the stage covers ninety minutes while the story time is nothing less than three months. Out of this

long scripted narrative, almost forty minutes are sung. Major sections of the songs underscore the spoken text as the start of the play, the association of the Author with the audience and then with the Flames, role of the Naga falling in love with Rani, Rani feeling transferred into the fantasy world of love and seduction, the ending when Rani is honored as a Goddess and the people chant her name with respect. The action on the stage begins with a descriptive pause, audience watch the Author in the temple explain his troublesome situation where he hangs helplessly between life and death. There are portions of Ellipses in the theatrical script where passage of days and weeks are escaped from theatrical staging. There is no gap of time between Bishni's visits to Rani on stage whereas textual script displays this gap as long as days and weeks.

There are never any slow-down scenes on the stage as there is never any wastage of time applicable for the stage. The time gap of days and months are just left for the audience to comprehend.

5.c. Frequency

As a narrative strategy extrapolated from Gerard Genette's temporal categories, frequency refers to the number of times an event occurs in a story compared to the number of times it is mentioned or revisited in the textual discourse. In the conception of *Naga Chayya* it was valuable in practical terms to enlarge the conception of frequency to comprise iterations of similar scenes and to reflect on structural patterns. If one accepts Brad Haseman's (1998) claim that the imagination seeks coherence in a work comprised of fragments as *Naga Chayya* is, then frequency is a determining factor in establishing coherence and rendering it meaningful. Furthermore, close analysis reveals that the structural integrity of the work is contingent on a number of overlapping or interlocking patterns.

To clarify the above, for instance in *Naga Chayya*, the iterative or the frequentive scenes of Shama's everyday routine of coming home for his meals and leaving are not staged. This is because such elaborate frequentive scenes are left for audience imagination. While in text it becomes clear that such a daily practice occurred for long before Bishni visits Rani but in stage performance it is for spectators to join the loose threads together. Scenes in repeating form are also restricted on stage because of

strict time limit. Naga's repeated visits are shorted on the stage. However, the two visits of Bishni are staged as singulative form of scene depiction. They are displayed without any gaps and omissions.

Narrative patterns- the recurrence of Rani's attempt to seduce Shama and then Naga's seduction of Rani determines the frequency pattern of the major story. Naga's often transformation to Shama is also consequential for the movement in the plot. Having decided on a structure that makes use of fragments to present multiple voices and points of view, the need to limit the number of character voices became evident so that the same characters could be kept alive from Sequence to Sequence. Rani is ubiquitous, but her presence is destabilized by having her character played by two actors. Further the role of the Author, Shama and the Naga are played by a single artist. A sense of coherence must then be created by regular appearances in many of the Sequences by other characters like Bishni and Kesho. This allows the audience to follow the journeys of familiar characters through frequent glimpses of either their direct involvement in the action or their reactions to the effect on their lives.

Point of View

Robert Stam (2005) asserts that the term "point of view" is ambiguous and problematic as every contributing element can theoretically assume a narrational point of view because of the multi-track nature of the play. Extending this thought to the dramaturgy of *Naga Chayya* in particular, it is a fact that every contributor and every contributing element - the writer of the adaptation, the director, the actors and their characters, the owners of the source texts, the designers of lighting and sound, the composer and his music, the power point slides -all have different points of view and differing degrees of influence on the production.

To a large extent the adaptation format of *Naga-Chayya* stands forth as an interrogative text, raising questions over some major societal traditions. Though the destination to obtain this climax is foremost among every contributor of this direction but the point of view of its processing certainly have been disparaging. This is not to claim that these elements contest with one another for some predominant narrational role. Either working in harmony or in tension, all elements contribute to and affect the

tone of the audience's reception of the adaptation. Furthermore, all the elements are calibrated in the writing, direction, performance and production to control what Robert Stam writes, the "intimacy and distance ... and access to characters' knowledge and consciousness" (*Literature and Film* 35). If the audience is to receive the work as coherent then the play itself must be able to be perceived holistically rather than as disparate elements pulling in different directions.

Whilst there is not a single designated narrator in *Naga Chayya* so in order to present multiple points of view the audiences have been engaged by a range of narrational devices. Vansh Bhardwaj plays the character of the Author, then Shama and then the Naga. Rani is played by two artists Ramanjit and Payal. All the artists in different characters add on to the individual point of view of the play. While explaining the thought behind this characterization Neelam Mansingh herself writes:

During the rehearsal period, I felt that just as the character of the husband is split into two-the brutal husband metamorphosing into a divine lover at night, I wanted to give a similar metaphysical layering to the character of Rani. I did this by not *marking* the actors by the character they are playing; -the writer becomes the husband who becomes the Naga. The story becomes the beautiful women, who then become the wife. This constant shifting of the character was an attempt to plumb the complex and dense ideas of the play." (Message to the author. E-mail)

So the scheme of characterization followed by Neelam Mansingh in her direction helps a lot in revealing her point of view regarding this folkloric mythical tale.

Universal Point of View

Neelam Man Singh's theatre has been at once indigenous and global; it beautifully illustrates the value of universality in theatre -- something that lends Neelam Mansingh's creations their alluring uniqueness.

A part of this zest was there for the Japanese to delight in when Neelam Mansingh took her most grand production *Naga-Chayya* to Japan for participation in the Indo-Japan Friendship Year celebrations. She was the only theatre practitioner from

India to have been called for the show, motivated by the need to bring a scattered South-East Asia together.

In an interview Neelam Man Singh opines regarding the goal of the festival that, “For all of us in South-East Asia, the tools of theatrical training have come from the West. The proscenium is from the West, so are the practitioners we grew up admiring, be it Ibsen or Shakespeare. But there’s hardly a Japanese or Sri Lankan playwright that we know. The Japan Foundation recognised the need to establish connection between these culturally-alienated nations that share so much history.” (“Neelam To Stage Friendship play in Japan”)

Neelam Man Singh being a strong-headed personality was never intimidated with the thought of performing in Japan as she has earlier been to the country for attending Japan Festival of the Arts in 2003. At that time she showcased *Kitchen Katha*, another of her renowned creations, that also fused source material with a performance style grounded in Punjabi aesthetics. While staging *Naga-Chayya*, (Punjabi play) it was also subtitled in Japanese to assist the process of comprehension. This was the play that catapulted her on the International theatre scene. The impression of the play lasted, so much so that Junko Hamachan , an independent impresario of Japanese theatre festival came down to Chandigarh to witness *Naga-Chayya* when Neelam Man Singh recreated it.

Besides Neelam Man Singh, a young director Soham Mehta co-directed *Naga-Chayya* in Houston in March 2007. Then in 2009 in *Svapnagata* festival, which means ‘dreaming’ in Sanskrit , a two- week fest was held in London Sadler Well’s London dance house where *Naga-Chayya* was successfully performed. So the production of *Naga Chayya* saw both national and international staging and fortunately received a very positive and passionate response throughout the globe.

This universal acclaim which *Naga Mandala* received as *Naga Chayya* has been certainly because of the worthy efforts of Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry. One can certainly finish off by claiming that contemporary Punjabi theatre has a few proud ambassadors and Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry is certainly counted among the best of them. Apart from being invited to all the major festivals in India, Neelam Mansingh has

been in the forefront of Indian theatre artistes whose works are invited abroad with much praise and awe. She is a regular on the international theatre festival circuit and even in countries like Japan where acceptance and appreciation are difficult and rare. Her plays have won praise for combining western classical writing with a performance style grounded in Punjabi aesthetics by incorporating music, ritualistic elements and images that endeavour to communicate as strongly as words. The *Naga-Mandala* is considered to be one of the Girish Karnad's masterpieces and Neelam Mansingh's *Naga-Chayya* is regarded as the best production of the play.