



THE NAGAMANDALA WORSHIP IN PARASHURAMA KSHETRA

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In coastal Karnataka still in the 21st century, the serpent worship is grandly celebrated. *Nagamandala* is a very special kind of serpent worship in coastal Karnataka; *Udupi* district and its neighboring districts like *Uttara Kannada* and *Dakshina Kannada* and even *Kasargod* district of Kerala, and other regions. In this region, people are strongly devoted to Naga god; and they expend more money for worships. In the performance of *Nagamandala*, feast also is provided to thousands of devotees during lunch and dinner time as a *prasadam*.

The serpent form is considered as the first tattoo used by a man to symbolize the God. Fear is one of the main reasons to depict a God. Ancient societies first worshipped nature; then started worshipping five elements (*Panchabhootas*). Scholars say that the serpent worship is as older as Indus valley civilization. Naga was worshipped even in Vedic and *Puranic* times. Naga is also represented as *Vayu* among the five elements. Shiva, Vishnu, Jain *Teerthankara*, *Bhagwan Parshwanath*, etc. cannot be imagined without Naga.

And we can say that the serpent worship is universal because it is authentic in China, Poland, Britain, Scotland, Venezuela, Tibet, Malaysia, Africa, Rome, Norway, Japan, Mexico, Korea, Central America, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Java, Fiji islands, Cambodia, etc., Naga occupies a role in all their culture and traditions. In Babylonia Naga was worshipped along with Sun god. In Malaysia there is a famous Naga temple called as '*Chor Soo Kong*'. Snake symbols are there in the crowns of Egyptian kings and queens. In Egyptian pyramids Naga is depicted as God '*Ijo*'. Some religious texts of Australia mentioned about the relationship of Naga and earthquake.

African's serpent belief and worships are closely matched with the Indian beliefs. Africans, they believe that, the human being were learned romance by snakes and also believe snake as the fertility god. Africans have a legend that God first created snake, before creating all other beings, because of the heaviness of earth; he made snake to stand spirally and ordered to hold the earth. Africans they do not kill snakes; if they found a dead snake they do funeral obsequies. Due to all this reasons serpent worship can be said as universal norm.

Mythical background

There is no mention or explanation about Naga god in Veda, *Kalpadruma*, *Nirukta*. But in *Purana* there is a text regarding the stories of Naga.

In the universe there are fourteen different worlds are related to earth, among this '*paatala loka*' is the one. It is the residence of divine *Nagas*. *Nagas* are having some kind of magnetic energies. They are closely related to the *trinity* Gods and they are inseparable from them. Naga gods having a hold and control over the earth. The *Naga's* of *Nagaloka* are not like serpents which we see generally on earth. *Nagas* are having high capabilities; even they can punish '*Panchabhoota's*'. For them all the human beings are equal, no caste or religion barriers.

Aadi Naga Shakthi is the inherent power of *Ishwara*. Already there are one hundred *crore* Brahma's, six *crore* Vishnu's and countless many *Indras* and minor gods were born and vanished. The destruction occurs during every Brahma's end and it was already happened so many times. At every time many gods and goddesses took changed, but from the beginning of the universe the '*Kaala Shakthi*' and '*Aadi Naga Shakthi*' never have been changed, both of them are resided inside Shiva. They are inherent energies of Shiva; they participate during the destruction time, co-activated with other energies.

Aadishesha's work is controlled by the *Aadi Naga Shakthi*. *Aadishesha* is stood on Para *Shakthi's* toe of the left leg; he is holding earth on his head. It is called as '*sankarshana shakthi*' like a gravitational force in the science. (61) 9.25

Nagamandala

Mandala is a technical word and gives several meaning like land, area, region, boundary, etc. And it is the seating to install the divine powers. Sometimes it looks like a map. One huge painting is made on the floor about 10 to 15 feet is called as *Nagamandala*, the worship is centered to this. They do *pooja* to the *mandala* and the ritual sing; dance is performed with this *mandala*.

The *Nagamandala* is varied by four types; *Eka pavitra mandala* (single knot), *Chatuh pavitra* (4 knots) or *Kaalu* (quarter) *mandala*, *ashta pavitra* (8 knots) or *Ardha* (half) *mandala*, *shodasha pavitra mandala* (16 knots) or *Poorna* (full) *mandala*. The type of *mandala* is chose accordingly as per well faring head and family or the entire lineage, well faring a mass like entire country or region. According to the size and appearance of *mandala* the stage is constructed. At the centre there will be without pillars.

While taking particular measurement, the plantain stem is put in a way of square frame. Inside is filled with the yellow powder. At the centre of the square *swastika* is drawn, they call it as *Ganapati*. The owner or *Nagamandala* worshiper, *Purohit* and *Vaidya* altogether they prey the *swastika* (*Ganapati*) for good luck and to avoid all obstacles to construct the *mandala*. On the stage of the grandly decorated *mantapa*, *nagamandala* painting is done by the *Vaidya* and his team.

To construct the *poorna mandala* (16 knots) by 6 people it takes around 6 hours. The *rangoli chittara* (*Nagamandala*) they draw huge serpent of seven hoods with many curves interlinked with knots.

Colors in *Nagamandala* are limited only to the five that is red, white, green, yellow and black. These colors are prepared naturally; the turmeric and white is mixed to get red (*kum kum*), white clay or rice powder is as white; turmeric powder is as yellow, burnt rice husk is for black, the green leaf (*Jangama* leaf) powder is for green.

At first they sketch for the base line, they call it as '*jeeva rekhe*'. Knots are very important they mark it carefully then retaining the yellow sketch line, they draw and paint with color powders. They follow the proportionate thickness. Snakes eyes are colored in red.

At first with green powder, after that white powder, turmeric (yellow), red and black such a five colors used to show the relief of the hood of snake. Below the hood they draw '*Vishnu paada*' (Vishnu's foot), this symbolises the sequence of *Krishna* stepped on *Kaalinga* snake. On hood the big *Brahma's* face, grape creeper leaf's drawn in black color. They keep mass collections of *seeyaala* (tender coconut), *hingara*, betel nut, betel leaf; a fruit bunches at the sides of *chittara* (*mandala*).

By using white powder they draw dots to make the legs for snake. At the centre of snake form they draw 'baby eggs' with white powder.

The draw two triangles overlapped each in different directions are called as '*Ganapati*' by the *Nagamandala* worshippers. But it may be symbolizing male and female and also it is represented in '*Ardhanari*' (*Vaidya*). The same it is called as *Shri chakra* in the *Tantra*.

Vaidya's they tell about *mandala* that, they have drawn Naga *Yaksha*, *Brahma Yaksha*, *Trishula*, *Ganapathi*, and Naga. In *Nagamandala* separately head figure is drawn without legs and hands, they call it as '*Brahma Yaksha*' this may be not the mythological main four headed *Brahma*, it may be the Tulu people's fertility god called as *Beramar*. But many people they consider it as the main *Chaturmukha Brahma*.

Mandala's surroundings are covered by the rice, beetle nuts, *hingara*, and stems of plantain. *mandala* surrounded by lamps. The worship proceeds for two days the main part is the Naga *nartana* on the stage.

Vaidyas they do dance and sing songs, deliver *shlokas* which would provoke, tempt, tease, appreciate the characters of Naga. It is pleasurable to watch the whole night event; it is the combinations of *navarasa*. Vocal music based on ancient *daasa* literature, *devata* Sanskrit *shlokas* are translated to Kannada, *beeja* mantra *shlokas* and some traditional *vaidya's* idioms are all used in this performance. In between *pooja* is made to *mandala* here *Vaidya* uses some *mudras*.

Generally there are two roles in this *Nagamandala*, that is *Naga* (male serpent)

and *nagini*, Naga role is played by the Brahmins community who act as serpent, called as Naga *patri*. *Vaidya* community played the role of *Nagini* (the female serpent or *Nagakannika*), also as an *Ardhanareeshwara*. Other three *Vaidyas* involved two in beating *dhakke* and one handle the cymbals and also they sing. *Ardhanari* communicates with Naga as a friendship, quarrel, humble, tease, love, etc. *Nagakannika* is the form of *prakruti* and *nagapatri* is the form of *Shivapurusha*. At the middle of the ritual there is an activity of *Nagapatri* and *Nagini* both were embraced it is called as '*milana*', this stage is said to be '*prakruti-purusha milana*'.

The *Vaidya* uses *dhakke*, dances and sing song, deliver *stutis* and *Nagapatri* give expression of a snake. For the outsiders performance may appear like an art or funny. For the regional people it is only a celebration of worship dedicated to the Naga God. A common man among the audience said that 'not to call the Naga *patri*'s dance as a general 'dance'. Because, it is enjoyed only with devotion and having a feeling about 'Naga *devata*' (serpent god). Naga *patri* is imitating serpent's expression and movements; it can be called as 'Naga *nartana*'. In *Nagamandala* performance devotees considered the Naga *patri* as a serpent only. Naga *patri* acts as a live serpent God. English we don't find a similar word for '*nartana*' which can gives the same meaning or feeling.

For this worship *hingara* is needed more and more *Nagapatri* rubs and inhales it then the rice kind of buds from the flower stuck in to his face and body; in this way god is invoked and no one can feel the worship as a dramatic, stunt or a comic. The worship is purely concerned to Naga God as devotion.



It is Ashta Pavitra Nagamandala, the knots are identified in '8' shapes.



Ardhanareeshwara (*Nagini*) beats *dhakke* and deliver translated Kannada *shlokas*.



The Milana sequence in the worship.

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