



KARNAD'S ALIENATED MODERN MAN DEPICTED THROUGH HAYAVADANA

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ABSTRACT

To create a bizarre world, Karnad employs the conventions and ornamentation of folk saga and folk theatre which involve masks, curtain, dolls, and the story-within-a-story. He creates a great drama which has prominent tone and expression. His outstanding ability and power to alter any circumstance into an aesthetic experience is noteworthy. He spotlights mainly on the complexity of human relationship and acts as a meandering critique of contemporary Indian society. The blending of issues by Karnad like love, identity and sexuality with folk culture and his imagination is praiseworthy.

INTRODUCTION

Girish Raghunath Karnad is born on 19 May 1938. Apart from being a contemporary writer and playwright he is also a screenwriter, actor and movie director in the language of Kannada. In 1960s, he rose as an eminent playwright and marked the imminent Modern age of Indian playwriting in Kannada. The plays written by Karnad were translated into quite a few Indian languages and many eminent movies were made by the directors. He is famous even in the world of Indian cinema as he worked as an actor, director, and screenwriter, not only in Kannada but also in Hindi cinema who earned several awards all along the way. The Government of India has conferred Karnad Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan. Apart from this he has even won 4 Film fare Awards.

In 1971 the play Hayavadana won the Natya Sangh Best Play Award. By exerting the devices of myth, folklore and history, Karnad tackles with the problematical of this subjectivity. These devices are exercised by him not simply to look through the past but even to give the impression of being at the present and also to predict the future. To create a new

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consciousness of the absurdity of human life, he uses myth and history with all its zeal and inconsistency.

The title of the play, Hayavadana has a significant meaning where, haya means horse/body and vadana means man/ head. The title Hayavadana is apt for the play as the character Hayavadana attains completeness rather than any other main characters such as Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini. And notably, he is complete, in view of the fact that towards the end, he is the lone person who is contented with the life! Considering a person to be complete/ incomplete is based on one's own perception; otherwise, when the animal-headed Ganesha is regarded as the supreme and why would the animal headed Hayavadana considered as incomplete.

Main Paper

Hayavadana is an inscrutable play. In the play the sub-plot is totally diverse from that of Karnad's invention. The stories of the sub-plot in the play all the way through support the main plot. Kirtinath Kurkkoti says, "Karnad's play poses a different problem, that of human identity in a world of tangled relationships." Another critic U. R. Anantha Murthy in his 'A Note of Karnad's Hayavadana,' comments "the theme like incompleteness in a comic mode, and that the play tries to create an illusion in us that the head determines the being of man."

The play talks about the age-old discussion of self at one level and on another level it depicts the nation's effort to break away from the mark of cultural dominion obligated by the colonial past. In totality the play draws substantially from the composition of Yakshagana and knits several parallel narratives around the central plot in concentric designs.

The central plot of the play is drawn from Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads* (1955) which actually has its source from the eleventh century ancient Sanskrit collection of stories *Brihatkathasaritasagara* by Somdeva. Thus, the Hayavadana's origin is "inter-generic, a folktale transformed into a novella into a play." The Sanskrit tale simulates a moral riddle where Mann queries to probe the reason as of which holds the head greater than the body. In the story *Kathasaritsagara*, a woman travels along with her husband and brother. She finds the decapitated bodies of her husband and brother in the temple. She then attains a boon from the goddess Parvati to bring back both of them to life. But by mistake switches their heads which results in the problem of 'true' identity. An explicit solution is given in this version- that is: in view of the fact that as the head stands for the man, the one with the husband's head can be considered as the husband.



Karnad constructs on Mann's line to find out the theme of individuality in a world of perplexed relationships. The aim of the play is demystification of conventional ethics and theories and presents various perspectives which uphold a dialogue on the fundamentally established tenets of life. This can be improved by the assimilation of three levels of practice – the divine, human and animal. Moreover to bring the animate and the inanimate commonly to a universal plane. The play has a plot that intertwines the sub-plot to investigate the complicated questions of individuality and the temperament of reality; the witty assimilation of patterns from conventional theatre — Yakshagana, a play within a play, dolls, masks; the impudent inversion of mock-heroic traditions. The text begs experimenting the research and has new insight of realism.

The central plot of the play Hayavadana gyrate around the scrambled relationships involving the chief characters of Padmini, Devadatta and Kapila. It also investigates the how bouts of the humans and how they constantly desire for more and are drawn towards imperfection devoid of being thoughtful of what they actually own.

In the play, Karnad deals with the query of Head and Body through a different motive. Amusingly, both the main and the sub-plot of the play deal with the ethical and idealistic feature of the predicament which elevates more essential issues concerning the human survival. The play has diverse civilizing implications, which are appropriate even today. Here's a peek into what the play is all about. Culture defines society and Karnad's plays are a reflection of the culture in our society. Focusing on our folk culture, he takes inspiration from mythology and folklore. With Hayavadana, Karnad has taken us back to the myths and legends of the Hindu religion.

Bhagavata illustrates the story thus; the close friends Devadatta and Kapila are like - "one mind, one heart". Devadatta is a man of mental power where as Kapila is a body builder and is also better-looking. When Kapila discovers his best friend Devadatta miserably daydreams about Padmini, he decides to organize Devadatta's marriage and goes to her and understands that Padmini is not only intelligent but also beautiful. Even Kapila is attracted to her, however he arranges the marriage. Padmini ascertains herself getting mesmerized to the strong-bodied Kapila, and Devadatta becomes obsessive with jealousy. The three starts for the Ujjain fair all the way through a forest and take a halt at the halfway to take a rest. Burning with jealousy, Devadatta offer himself to Goddess Kali. Kapila goes in search of Devadatta and finds him dead. But apprehensive with fear that he may be accused of killing Devadatta to marry Padmini, he too beheads himself. Then when suspicious Padmini finds them dead, is horrified that she might be held responsible for their deaths, then comes to a decision to take life of her. However, goddess Kali stops her and offers to bring the men back to existence. Padmini rearranges the heads so that Devadatta's head is on Kapila's body and



vice versa. When they all ask an astute, he affirms that as the head is the utmost organ of the body, the man bearing Devadatta's head be supposed to be her husband. Devadatta who is on Kapila's body gradually changes to his previous personality. So even Kapila's. After the replacement of heads, Padmini, who had felt that she had the supreme characteristics of both men, is slowly dissatisfied. The story ends with her self-immolation which follows the both friends' death who slay each other in a duel.

There are a number of civilized implications in the play, which are fitting even in the modern day. The play is regarding an exploration of a Man's own self in the midst of a web of complex relationships. Culture exemplifies society and Karnad's works are a manifestation of the said culture in our society. Focusing on our folk ethnicity, he acquires stimulus from folklore and mythology. Karnad takes us back to the myths and legends of the Hindu religious conviction through the play, Hayavadana.

Kapila and Devadatta are the characters which gives the expressions of the metaphors of diverse castes which exist in our society.

Mann argues, that

“the human body is an appliance for the achievement of human providence. Even though the transposition of heads took place, it did not set the protagonists free from the psychosomatic confines imposed by the environment.”

The play replicates an unrelated predicament so as to have human distinctiveness in a world of tousel relationships. The trio's subsequent resist with objective, uniqueness and survival is sited within a series of events regarding the quest for a sagacity of conclusion, directed by Hayavadana, the horse-headed man. The basis of the play lies in the innovation for uniqueness in the midst of scrambled relationships. The play spotlights on "the theme of incompleteness" and the preeminence of mind on body. From beginning to end of the play, the author has simulated his power to modify the conditions into a creative experience. On the whole, the play encompasses the limitations of the human and the theme of liability.

In the city of Dharmapura, there lived two young and close friends, namely Devadatta and Kapila. Devadatta is the son of the honored Brahmin who is excellent at logic and reason. He has succeeded the poets around the world with his verse and intelligence. He is fair in color and unrivalled in intelligence. Kapila, his bosom friend who is the son of the ironsmith, Lohita appears dark and simple but brave and has no equivalent in physical power. Though the two friends vary in academic competence and physical strength, they behave as though



they have one mind and one heart. When Devadatta loves and desires for Padmini who is the daughter of a top leading merchant, Kapila is the one who assists him in finding out her belongingness and works as a messenger in the process of their love and marriage.

Devadatta vows to offer his head to God Rudra and both of his arms to the goddess Kali so that he can get Padmini's hand in marriage. Devadatta's friendship with Kapila sustained even after their wedding. The combination was like Devadatta-Padmini-Kapila! To the wholehearted citizens of Dharmapura, Rama-Sita- Lakshmana.

When Kapila along with Padmini goes to the temple of Rudra, Devadatta bids them Goodbye. Although he has promised that he would offer his arms to Kali, now he offers her his head. On finding Devadatta in such a state, Kapila finds himself incapable to live without Devadatta but to follow the footsteps of Devadatta as there was no choice left. When in the similar manner Padmini too tries to kill herself, Goddess Kali gives her a boon. But Padmini mixes the head and the body of Devadatta and Kapila which implies her inner urge of having a man of Devadatta's intelligence and Kapila's muscular body.

Devadatta and Kapila quarrel with each other about the possession of Padmini which clearly portrays the incompleteness of human existence. According to the Shastras argues Devadatta, the head actually is the sign of man and the one who possesses the head of Devadatta stands for Devadatta. But Kapila argues that since she is married to Devadatta's body with the witness of holy fire, she in actuality belongs to him. The search for perfection and completeness of the Human beings is portrayed very well.

Though Devadatta and Padmini return back to Dharmapura, Kapila wishes to stay in the forest itself. Now Devadatta won people in the wrestling match with Kapila's body. But this lasts only for a small time. By the habit of applying sandal oil to his body, Devadatta's body is softened and he slowly loses the virility and follows the family tradition of reading and writing. Whereas Kapila having a soft Brahmin body feels very difficult even to lift an axe but finally wins after the war between the head and the body. The result of all these chaos arises due to Padmini's lack of ability to acknowledge human incompleteness and discord.

Padmini become conscious of the malfunction in the heads transposition. Devadatta's body loses its power and might and changes to a soft Brahmin body. There are numerous contemporary emancipated women in the modern society like Padmini, who make a mess of their life. As they desire to feel affection for their husband for something and have a high regard for another man for some other thing and finally gets tangled with the relations.



Padmini goes to meet Kapila along with her son after sending Devadatta to buy new dolls for her son at the Ujjain fair. She reminds him about the split between his head and body which he forgot for many days. Kapila who is worried by all the memories of the past consider them as a mad dance containing incompleteness. Kapila agonizingly narrates the trouble to Padmini which he has undergone with the body of Devadatta. After returning from the fair Devadatta comes to know about the betrayal of Padmini, and reaches the forest in search of his wife and Kapila. Devadatta and Kapila start a dual and slaughter each other. The dual and death of the friends appear to be melodramatic, but evidently signify the absurdity of life. Devadatta and Kapila come to the decision that the only solution for their problem can be attained through death. Most ironical thing is that Padmini performs sati and hands over her son to Bhagavata. However the son of Padmini also undergoes identity crisis and the issue of biological father becomes very complex on his part.

In the play, Padmini symbolizes the imperfectness of human aspiration. She tries to get reunification of the mind and the body either in Devadatta or in Kapila. When she fails in finding it she expresses her desire to carry out her exploration for completeness all the way through her child. As a result, to accomplish her desire, she requests Bhagavata to give her son to the hunters in the forest to be brought up by them as the son of Kapila for five years and then should be handed over to Vidyasagara, her father-in-law, a revered Brahmin as the son of Devadatta. Accordingly she desires to offer not only physical but also academic training for her son as a result he may achieve perfection in his life.

Hayavadana who bears the title of the play, actually the son of a princess and a white stallion too suffers with the same problem, that of identity. Hayavadana's mother, the princess of Karnataka when given choice to choose any of the one between the white stallion and the Prince of Arab, as her husband, she readily chooses the white stallion. Then Hayavadana is born with a body of man and horse's head. So to attain perfection, Hayavadana wants to get relieved of his horse head. Ultimately when he prays to goddess Kali for a complete body, she grants him perfection by making him a complete horse instead of a complete man. Even though he becomes a horse, he retains his human voice. Though Hayavadana do not commit any mistake he suffers without any fault of his own. Completeness is an ideal which is humanly impossible. It is suggested initially in the story of Hayavadana and later during the transposition of head.

Padmini's son is ardently and emotionally involves himself with the dolls and lacks the natural enjoyment and laughter of the child. He fails to correspond with anyone and does not communicate. But the boy breaks his barrier and laughs to his heart's content only when witnesses the laughing horse, Hayavadana. Hayavadana also attains completeness only after listening to the tragic song of the particular boy. Finally Hayavadana attains fulfillment by



getting the horse voice i.e. neighing. The totality which was impossible even with human beings is finally attained by the horse, Hayavadana.

There are two levels in the play.

The first level is that of Hayavadana's story which forms the 'exterior' plot of the play. By fully emerging as a man, Hayavadana, the man with a horse's head, tries to seek 'completeness'. By this way Hayavadana becomes representative of a fragmented identity, which is very appropriate in the modern day. Thus by intensifying the motif of incompleteness, Karnad explores existentialism. He is the embodiment of imperfection, be it his broken tusk or his cracked belly, whatever way we look at him, he is of in-completion.

The second level, which is of the primary plot, is that of two close friends, Kapila and Devadatta. They despondently dream for Padmini. Karnad also portrays the caste restrictions in the society and how a person is confined to the so-called 'caste occupations'. Devadatta is a learned Brahmin, who writes poetry and is physically in poor shape, whereas Kapila is a Kshatriya who is a wrestler and is physically strong. Even though Kapila is attracted to Padmini when he first meets her, he nevertheless organizes the marriage between Devadatta and Padmini.

The plot sooner or later congeals to when Padmini starts craving for Kapila simply for the physical vigor which her husband Devadatta lacks. When Devadatta and Kapila's heads are transposed the existentialist crisis takes place. The identity conflict is caused among both of the friends. Incapable to confront the problem logically Kapila draws back to the forest.

CONCLUSION

The moral deprivation of the society is apparent through Padmini's craving to have the brain power of Devadatta and the physically well built body of Kapila. Kapila's yearn and Padmini's anticipation portrays modern man's desire for fulfillment. Devadatta doubted about his wife's loyalty which was confirmed on seeing Padmini's admiring look at Kapila's "broad back with muscles rippling across it." The reason for the postponement of the journey to Ujjain by Devadatta was that he doesn't like Kapila to be present during the journey. But when Padmini insisted upon the tour, there was no alternative left for Devadatta. Entire world appeared to be wiped out for Kapila without Devadatta and Padmini. There is no doubt in saying about Devadatta and Kapila that they are ethically weak. The reason for their suffering is because of their incapability in finding their identity in the relationship of triangular love.

The man in the modern society is suffering from alienation. He isolates himself from his associate men, colleagues and the society and restricts himself in the world self-created by



him. Both Devadatta and Kapila undergo through the segment of self-alienation. Devadatta feels himself isolated from Padmini whereas Kapila is incapable of discussing his distress and pain with neither Padmini nor Kapila.

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