



The Tale of Human Myth and Identity Crisis in Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*

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Abstract: Girish Karnad has exposed the play *Hayavadana* with the myth of Ganesha and a Character's longing for wholeness is expected with eternal thrust. The plot of *Hayavadana* is a sub-plot and this sub-plot is Karnad's own imaginative creation with simplistic Imagination. It is centered on complex human dilemmas and this complexity finds no actual resolution. The present study focuses on the tale of human myth and identity crisis. The plot of *Hayavadana* comes from *Kathasaritsagara*, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit. But Karnad has borrowed it through Thomas Mann's retelling of the story in *The Transposed Heads*. This play poses a moral problem while Mann uses it to ridicule the mechanical conception of life that differentiates between body and soul. He ridicules the ideology, which holds the head superior to the human body. The human body, Mann argues that a fit instrument for the fulfilment of human destiny. Although the transposition of heads, will not liberate the protagonists from the psychological problems imposed by nature.

Key words: Human myth, Identity crisis, Love, and ideology.

Introduction

Girish Karnad is one of the most living playwrights in India today. He is a bilingual playwright who mostly deserves in Kannada and translates his works into English. He was born in 1938 and is culturally associated with both Maharashtra and Karnataka. He is a playwright, filmmaker, an actor, a writer and an activist. He has been at the centre of the some of the most artistic and cultural movements of the last four decades in India. He has received several awards for his works. *Hayavadana* (1971) is a play covered subjects as ancient and modern sources the ancient Sanskrit *Kathasaritsagara* and the novella of the twentieth century novelist. It is a story about two men fall in love with one woman and through this typical tale of love and human identity and social questions about women's desires and societal restrictions. Girish Karnad is one of the notable playwrights of the contemporary Indian stage. He has written twelve plays including those not translated into English, each play is unique in itself for its experimentation and techniques.

Girish Karnad wrote drama for the purpose of entertainment show among the audience played by the theatre. The drama presents fiction or fact that could be acted before an audience of the stage performed by the characters. New playwrights like Girish Karnad has been able to bring to drama for a first- hand knowledge of the

practical demands of the stage and a better understanding of dramatic style and technique. None of his plays has specified Kannada theme. The play *Hayavadana* is based on the tale of Thomas Mann's *Kathasaritsagara*, which used for his short novel. *The Transposed Heads*, an ancient collection of Sanskrit stories. Karnad is connected with the problem of human identity and human relationship. The play opens with the mythological view of Lord Ganesh who is the lord of 'Riddhi and Siddhi', and destroyer of incompleteness'. The play highlights the chorus commenting upon the theme. Bhagavata is surprised to note that Ganesh who is incomplete every way in physical features, is the God of completeness. The following invocation of lord Ganesh which expresses the transposition of heads is the main theme of *Hayavadana*. Bhagavata states that:

An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk, and a cracked belly- whenever you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness. How indeed can one fathom the mystery that this very Vakratunda-Mahakaya, with his crooked face and distorted body, is the lord and Master of success and perfection? Could it be that this image of Purity and Holiness, this Mangalamoorthy, intends to signify by his very appearance that the completeness of god is something no poor mortal can comprehend? (*Hayavadana* 1)

The play has a several main plot and a subplot. The subplot has revealed around the horseman deepens the significance of the incompleteness treating it on a different theme. The horseman's search for completeness ends comically with his becoming a complete horse. The play begins with an invocation is generally found in Hindu traditional wings. Then he continues to tells us the story of the two youths, Devadatta and Kapila living in the city of Dharampura, and ruled by the king Dharmasheela. Devadatta is the son of the Reverend Brahmin, a Vidyasagar. He has conquered the mighty Kingdoms in the Pundits in debates on logic and love, and poets of the world with his poetry and witty.

Kapila is the only son of blacksmith, Lohita. He is dark and plain to look at the deeds requiring drive and daring, in dancing and strengthens the physical skills, which has no equal. He represents the ultimate in physical prowess. This two youths are complementary to each other, are bosom friends. These two young persons, are intimate friends, diametrically opposed with appearance and qualities, remained the people of Dharmapura of "Love and Kusha, Rama and Lakshmana, and Krishna and Balarama" (2). Devadatta falls in love with Padmini, the daughter of a blessing who disguise for the selfish Padmini enjoys Devadatta's intellect skill and masculine body of Kapila. He disappears into the forest; Devadatta and Padmini return to Dharampura and plunge into the joys of married life. A change takes over Devadatta, and his body suffers a transformation, Kapila also undergoes a transformation. Padmini and Kapila again meet in the forest and attracted by his masculinity. Padmini lives for herself for the satiation of her sensuality. Both Devadatta and Kapila kill each other and Padmini performs Sati. The practice of "Sati" is ridiculed here. The song of the female voice is full of grotesque beauty female chorus:

The fortunate lady's procession goes to the street of laburnums, while the Makarandas tie the pennants and jacarandas hold lights. Good bye dear sister. Go without fear. The lord of death will be pleased with offering of three coconuts. (63)

The ideal combination of the human spirit and the flesh in human life is next to unattainable. *Hayavadana*, horseman is the subplot of Karnad's own invention. It deepens the significance of the main theme reveals the incompleteness by treating it on a different plane. It plays as a prologue and as an epilogue. As Krishna Gandhi states that:

The theme of the play is an old one... man's yearning for completeness, for perfection. It's this yearning which makes people restless in their ordinary existence, and makes them reach out for extraordinary things... But the ideal of perfection itself is ambiguous. The character of *Hayavadana* is invented as an example of this ambiguity. (Enact 68-69)

Hayavadana is a man with the head of a horse; "Haya" means horse and "Vadana" means face. *Hayavadana* is the son of the princess of Karnataka, a very charming girl, who fell in love with a white stallion. She was married off to the horse and lived with him for fifteen years. One fine morning, the horse moved into a celestial being and revealed that he was a Gandharva cursed by the God Kubera to be born a horse for an act of some misbehavior. After fifteen years of human love, he had attained his original self again. Yet she wished him to become a horse again. He cursed her to be a horse herself. *Hayavadana* wants to get rid of his horse's head and become a complete man. He goes to the Kali temple later and threatens to chop off his head. Before the study of themes and techniques of the play, it could be the better understanding of the play. As mentioned above, the story of *Hayavadana* comes from Thomas Mann's story titled *Transposed Heads*, which is based on the versions of the story in *Vetal Panchavinshati*. It is valuable to mention the words of Krishna Gandhi about the theme of the play:

The theme of the play is an old one...man's yearning for completeness, for perfection. It is this yearning which makes people restless in their ordinary existence, and makes them reach out for extra-ordinary things...But the idea of perfection itself is ambiguous (200).

The overview of the story '*Transposed Heads*' is Shridaman, a birth of Brahmin but the profession of Vaishya, and Nanda a cowherd and blacksmith, are close friends. Shridaman fallen in love with Sita whom he happens to see the two friends are travelling together. Nanda laughs at the idea but agrees to act as a messenger of his friend. Sita agrees the proposal and marries Shridaman.

After the moment Shridaman, Nanda and Sita are travelling each other in a cart to a house of Sita's parents they mislay track, come across a temple of Kali and take a halt.

Shridaman visits the temple alone and, overcome by an unbelievable support, offers himself to the Goddess as a sacrifice. Nanda goes to look after his friend, finds what has

happened and afraid of the charge that he killed his friend as he was in love with Sita and he do not want to live without his friend, kills for himself. Sita realizes what has happened and prepares to hang for her. The Goddess Durga appears in front of her and chides her for the act and grants life of the two dead bodies. Here, Goddess blessed her to set the heads on their dead bodies to make them alive. Sita, in her excitement fixes the heads on wrong bodies.

On the other hand, can easily observe that the plot of the play *Hayavadana* extends much beyond from the point where the story of Vetala gets its culmination. How the woman would take it if it really happens and would it ultimately solve the problem for her? Girish Karnad, all his plays take place his several themes from the ancient myths and stories and more than he develops his own imagination. No doubt, he has taken his themes from the various folk stories but his plays took from the original stories. This play is the further development of the artist's imagination and it challenges the glib solutions offered in the original stories.

Conclusion

Hayavadana is a peculiar criticism one among the readers. Here Karnad wants to reveal that Kapila's masculinity hypnotises Padmini whose sensuality has remained unsatisfied. She wants Kapila as a superb specimen of humanity. Devadatta is more jealous of Kapila. Both kill themselves in the temple of Kali. The goddess empowers her to give Devadatta and Kapila to life by putting their trunks, but in get dilemmas and excitement. The transposition of heads disguised an absurd situation. Devadatta and Kapila go to see the temple of Rudra, Devadatta ask himself for a moment to visit the temple alone. Then in a sudden of emotion burst out it, he decides to sacrifice his heads to Kali. His generosity and selflessness are well treated and the audience knows from the earlier dialogue in the play. Once he realizes the nature of the relationship between Padmini and Kapila, later themselves to remove himself from the scene rather than make the painful choice of sharing Padmini with Kapila. Finally Padmini stumbles on the opportunity of having the best of the two men with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body.

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