

## KARNAD'S *HAYAVADANA*: A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY AND WHOLENESS

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### Abstract

Girish Karnad is a prolific playwright who has enriched the Indian drama by virtue of his dramatic genius. He is the only playwright with substantial postcolonial reverberations. The play *Hayavadana* (1975) was translated into English from Kannada. Celebrated as one of the most famous plays in India, *Hayavadana* is a fusion of time-honoured Indian folktales and modern-day western theatrics. The play is an enigmatic, contemplative and suspense one in which aspects of the real and bizarre are perfectly blended. The word *Hayavadana* means a person with a horse's head which has religious and mythological echoes. The play celebrates human impulse for evolution and displays its manifestation within the parameters of drama. Karnad's play poses a different problem, that of human identity in a world of tangled relationships. At the end of the play *Hayavadana* becomes a complete horse. The animal body triumphs over what is considered the best in man, the human head. Karnad depicts the mythological legend in a very interesting and humorous manner.

**Keywords:** Identity, Wholeness, *Hayavadana*, Enigmatic, Evolution.

*Hayavadana* is full of humour, sly comments on politics, and comic hyperbole... a richly layered play, intersperse[d] [with] typical Indian elements like the folk tale... a notable achievement.

- *The Hindu*

*Hayavadana* is based on a story from a collection of tales called the *Kathasarithsagara* and the further development of this story by Thomas Mann in *The Transposed Heads*.

*Hayavadana* was published in 1970 exactly six years after *Tughlaq*. The story of this play comes partly from Tomas Mann's story which in turn is based on one of the versions of the story in *Vetal Panchavimshati*. *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala* are tales drawn from the written and oral traditions respectively. These folk tales offer adequate scope for Karnad's dramatic imagination to weave his humanistic vision about the down-to-earth aspect of human life. Karnad, additionally, has invented the whole sub-plot of *Hayavadana* and entitled the play after this mixed creature. While the main story of Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini has a social dimension of one woman and two men whom Karnad has had personal acquaintance, the secondary story of *Hayavadana* fulfils the playwright's ambition to write a play with sub-plot like Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Karnad has appeared on the literary scene with the genius and ability to transform any situation into an aesthetic experience. Of course, his association with the theatre must have worked in this direction considerably. The Indianness in his works could be counted right from the very beginning of the play one by one. India, a virtually Hindu-dominated country holds Sri Ganesha as a God to be worshipped at the very outset of starting a thing. In the play it opens with verses in praise of Lord Ganesha. The Bhagavata sings verses in praise of Lord Ganesha:

*O Elephant –headed Herambha  
whose flag is victory  
and who shines like a thousand suns,  
O husband of Riddhi and Siddhi,  
seated on a mouse and decorated with a snake,  
O single-tusked destroyer of incompleteness,  
we pay homage to you and start our play*

*BHAGAVATA: May Vigneshwara, the destroyer of obstacles, who removes all hurdles and crowns all endeavours with success, bless our performance now. How indeed can one hope to describe his glory in our poor, disabled words? An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and a crackled belly whichever way 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 Mangalamoortya, intends to signify by his very appearance that the completeness of God is something no poor mortal can comprehend? Be that as it may. It is not for us to understand this Mystery or try to unravel it. Nor is it within our powers to do so. Our duty is merely to pay homage to the Elephant-headed god and get on with our play.* (pp. 105-106).

In some epics like *Paradise Lost* we had invocation to god and muses. But in English grammar we do not see such practise. So the prayer to Ganesha is essentially Indian. The Sutradhara in *Yayati* and Bhagavata in *Hayavadana* are the devices derived from the classical drama in India. Sutradhara as the chorus in the Greek Drama plays the role of an introducer or a communicator. Known by different names in different regional varieties, he holds important position in the Indian folk theatre. Sutradhara and Bhagavata become one in *Naga-Mandala* and appear as the story. In *Hayavadana* the names of the characters are true to themselves. Devadatta is the son of a Brahmin and like a Deva-a God-he is knowledgeable. Kapila meaning 'iron', has

like body, Padmini meaning 'lotus' is beautiful like a lotus flower. Her name becomes symbolic as we see that the lotus is rooted in the Earth. The flower turned skyward symbolises nature (prakriti) of the human body. Hayavadana symbolises modern man. He is better than an animal but less than a human being. The plot of *Hayavadana* is based on folk tale and hence, all the ingredients of a folk story are deftly employed in it. Kirtinath Kurtkoti observes:

Karnad uses the conventions and motifs of folk tales and folk theatre-masks, curtains, dolls the stories within a story-to create a bizarre world. It is a world of incomplete individuals, indifferent gods, dolls that speak and children who cannot, a world indifferent to the desires and frustrations, joys and sorrows of human being. What is real is only the tremendous, irrational energy of the horse and the writer who move round the stage symbolising the powerful and monotonous rhythm of life. <sup>1</sup>

The play starts with a hymn of Lord Ganesha. Bhagavata who sings the hymn questions the Ganesha myth. Lord Ganesha is a God of imperfection but he is celebrated as the wholesome god. Jayadeep Sarangi rightly observes:

*The image of Ganesha is the prototype of main symbol-a man's body with an elephant's head and a broken tusk.* <sup>2</sup>

It is paradoxical that Lord Ganesha is praised as the destroyer of incompleteness. The use of Ganesha myth is highly suggestive in the play. The mad dance of incompleteness is the theme of the play in which the passion for perfection acts as an undercurrent. It is worthy to note that the story of *Hayavadana* evinces incompleteness and reminds one of Lord Ganesha. The play is an enigmatic one. It is a play on the search for identity in the midst of tangled relationships. Karnad deftly uses the convention and motifs of folk tales and folk theatre- masks, curtains, dolls, the story within a story- to create a bizarre world of incomplete individuals, indifferent gods, dolls that speak and children who cannot, world which appear to be indifferent to the desires and frustrations joys and sorrows of human beings. In fact, the central episode in the play-the story of Devadatta and Kapila-observes the playwright, is based on a tale from *Vetal Panchavimshati* (also known as *Vetal Pachisi*). But Karnad has drawn heavily on Thomas Mann's reworking of the tale in *The Transposed Heads*. Placing the myth of Ganesha at the centre, Karnad develops the themes by utilising the conventions and traditional repertoire of Indian folk theatre having elements of chorus, masks, dolls, curtains and the story within a story. The ancient Indian origin of the main plot of *Hayavadana* forms a constituent of Soma Deva's Katha Sarithsagara. The Indian story is built upon the moral problems of deciding the identity of a woman's husband. A washer-man marries a charming woman. They set out on a journey along with the woman's brother to participate in a festival in a nearby town. Then they reached the Kali temple. The husband sacrifices his head to the goddesses. The woman's brother also sacrifices his head to Kali. When the woman prepares to offer her head too, the goddesses not only checks her but also helps her by reviving the dead. But the woman mixes up the heads. The head of the husband is on the brother's shoulders and vice-versa. The moral dilemma is: who is her husband? The King Vikrama solves this problem by deciding that the figure with the husband's head is the actual husband of the woman. He holds that it is the head that determines the identity of a person. This mythical story has close resemblance with the story of *Hayavadana*. Under the influence of western ideology, Mann ridicules the basic concept of differentiating between body and soul. He holds that it is the body that is important, as it is instrumental in the fulfilment of human destiny. King Vikrama's solution may be agreeable to the Indians. But Thomas Mann steeped in the western view of the world, cannot accept it easily. Hence he weaves a long story with a view to

highlighting the philosophical problem of mind-body dualism. Karnad dwells on the complex psycho-social dimensions of the problem of identity crisis. Karnad's use of the character of the Bhagavata contributes a lot to the formal aspect of the play. He does not merely borrow the character of the Bhagavata from a typical *Yakshagana* play. He increases the scope of the role by making the Bhagavata not a mere commentator-narrator but also by making him one of the characters. The play opens with the offering of worship accompanied by singing to the God Ganesha by the narrator- figure called Bhagavata who is an 'avatar' of the Sutradhara of ancient Sanskrit drama, just as the worship and singing recall the 'Nandi' or the singing of benedictory verses with which every Sanskrit play begins. Apart from the ritualistic function, the Nandi often suggested the major concerns of the plot through the use of either symbols or play upon words. *Hayavadana* employs this device skilfully by choosing God Ganesha for ritual worship, for this God with his human body the elephant head aptly suggests a major development in the action as well as the central theme of completeness of being. In his prayer to Ganesha, the Bhagavata stresses many important points. Bhagavata starts narrating the story of the play. Two youths dwell in the city of Dharmapura ruled by King Dharmasheela. One is Devadatta who is comely in appearance and unrivalled in intelligence and is the only son of a Brahmin, Vidyasagara with his learning, wit and poetic ability, he has a sway over the people of Dharmapura. Kapila is the second youth. He is the only son of an iron smith called Lohita. He is very black and plain to look at but in physical strength and dancing he has no equal. The two youths are so close to each other that people remember Lava and Kusha, Rama and Lakshmana, Krishna and Balarama on seeing them. Devadatta is known for his intellectual and creative power and Kapila is known for his muscular physique and is popular as a wrestler. The Bhagavata's narration is interrupted by a Nata (actor) who rushes on to the stage in fear and informs the Sutradhar that outside the in the street he has met a talking-horse. This is Hayavadana, who has a man's body and a horse's head who has all his life been trying to get rid of head and become a complete man. Hayavadana, the eponymous character, comes and like Ganesha, he too is a symbol of alienation of man and its consequences in human society. He tries to suggestively the hegemony of Apollonian culture that has captured the racial unconscious of mind. The modern man represented by Devadatta-Kapila suffers from self alienation. The central story is about Devadatta and Kapila, but Hayavadana claims attention first. The baffled Nata brings the news of the presence of man with a horse's head speaking in human voice. As curtain is used to cover the sobbing horse-man whose persistent request to Bhagavata is to make him a complete man. He is advised to visit the Kali temple. The female chorus makes an ironic comment about the absurdity of search for completeness. After the set-ups of this frame works, Devadatta appears wearing a pale face-mask, and Kapila a dark mask. Mask is symbolic of shape-shifting; it is a means to revive an age old function of drama as ritual. Asked how Hayavadana has been subjected to this suffering, Hayavadana narrates his tale of woes. He says that it was because his mother got married with the white Stallion of the prince of Araby that he was born to them. When the white Stallion became a celestial being, a Gandharva after fifteen years of human love, as the God Kubera for some misbehaviour cursed him, and asked his wife to become a horse first, only then his wish could be fulfilled. His father cursed her at this and she became a horse. Hayavadana says all this to Bhagavata:

*Hayavadana: My mother was the Princess of Karnataka. She was a very beautiful girl. When she came of age, her father decided that she should choose her own husband. So princes of every kingdom in the world were invited-and they all came. From China, from Persia, from Africa. But she*

*didn't like any of them. The last one to come was the Prince of Araby. My mother took one look at that handsome prince sitting on his great white stallion-and she fainted.*

*ACTOR: Ah!*

*HAYAVADANA: Her father at once decided that this was the man. All arrangements for the wedding were made. My mother recovered- and do you know what she said?*

*ACTOR, BHAGAVATA: What?*

*HAYAVADANA: She said she would marry that horse!*

*ACTOR: What?*

*HAYAVADANA: Yes, She wouldn't listen to anyone. The Prince of Araby burst a blood-vessel.*

*ACTOR: Naturally.*

*HAYAVADANA: No one could dissuade her. So ultimately she was married off to the white stallion. She lived with him for fifteen years. One morning she wakes up- and no horse! In its place stood a beautiful celestial being called **Gandharva**. Apparently this celestial being had been cursed by the god Kubera to be born a horse for some act of misbehaviour. After fifteen years of human love he had become his original self again.*

*BHAGAVATA: I must admit several such cases are on record.*

*HAYAVADANA: Released from his curse, he asked my mother to accompany him to his Heavenly Adobe. But she wouldn't. She said she would come only if he became a horse again. So he cursed her...*

*ACTOR: No!*

*HAYAVADANA: He cursed her to become a horse herself. So my mother became a horse and ran away prancing happily. My father went back to his Heavenly Abode. Only I-the child of their marriage-was left behind. (pp.113-114)*

Hayavadana's refused to go to heavenly adobe with her Gandharva-husband. It seems that she was blessed in her bestial self only since she failed to recognise the divine aspect of relationship, so her life turns into a tragedy. And the tragedy is to be carried not only by her but by the next generation also that is Hayavadana carries the curse of incompleteness. Perfection could be attained in the acceptance of reality as truth. Karnad's Bhagavata is the mediator. He fulfils many roles in the play, from being the key to the play, a detached observer to the confidante of the heroine. Most significantly, he adroitly maintains the audience-stage contact. The speeches of Bhagavata are redolent with image making that at the outset build up an idyllic world of two friends. His description however is seasoned with ambiguity. The gentle, romantic tone off and on bursts into sharp satire-prickly and sensitive, illuminating the shadowy regions of male-female relationships-the mysteries of sexual attraction. The female chorus, giving Bhagavata, company in the beginning and the end build up the momentum of the play towards a complexities of factual details, psychological insight and ironic slash tragic foreshadowing

*BHAGAVATA (Sings): Two friends there were- one mind, one heart. They saw a girl and forgot themselves. But they could not understand the song she sang.*

*FEMALE CHORUS (Sings): Why should love stick to the sap of a single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many-petalled, many flowered lantana, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower?*

*BHAGAVATA (Sings): They forgot themselves and took off their bodies. And she took the laughing heads, and held them high so the pouring blood bathed her, coloured her red. Then she danced around and sang.*

*FEMALE CHORUS (Sings): A head for each breast. A pupil for each eye. A side for each arm. I have neither regret nor shame. The blood pours into the earth and a song branches out in the sky.* (pp. 116-117).

In *Hayavadana* the Indian ‘Varna’ system is polarized between head and body. Devadatta, the scholar-poet represents the head and Kapila, the ironsmith symbolises the body. Despite the social distance between them, they are presented as bosom friends. Ironically, it is the Shudra who manages to get Padmini, the Vaishya girl, for the Brahmin as his wife. The whole situation becomes complicated when Padmini and Kapila begin to appreciate each other’s feelings. With all his poetry, logic and scholarship, Devadatta is not as charming as the illiterate and rough Kapila. When the transposed Devadatta reverts to his original Brahmin shape Padmini is disillusioned and lives in the forest to be happy with Kapila. But Devadatta follows them soon to bring about the destruction for all the three. They cannot live like the Pandavas and Draupadi in *The Mahabharata* because they do not have the divine sanction of Lord Krishna. The two threads of action are woven together in *Hayavadana* together present a theme which may be summed up as the totality of being to be achieved through the integration of the self and the wholeness of the personality- a theme stressed in Samuel Beckett’s:

*You must be there... if you want them to let you go.* <sup>3</sup>

The play presents as many as five examples of fractured personality suffering from want of integration. *Hayavadana*’s plight has already been described; the two friends, the woman and her son in the transposed heads-plot have been given new names which carry their own symbolic suggestion at once similar to and different from those in Mann’s story. Shridaman is now called Devadatta (literally god given), the only son of a learned Brahmin Vidyasagara (the ocean of learning). Shridaman’s friend Nanda becomes Kapila, the only son of an ironsmith Lohita (iron). The reverberations of meanings in the name ‘Kapila’ are interesting. The word means variously tawny, reddish, it is synonymous with ‘Lohita’ which also means blood. It is also equivalent with ‘dog’. It might also be recalled that Kapila is the name of a famous sage who founded the school of philosophy (The Samkhya school of Indian philosophy), though this has obvious ironic significance when applied to the humble ironsmith’s son in the play. Deva Datta’s name stresses his primacy in the social hierarchy but also indicates, ironically, his failure to secure happiness on God’s earth. Hence the name of Kapila’s father suggests strength and Kapila’s own ‘blood’ or fleshy appetites. As far as the social hierarchy is concerned, he is certainly the bottom dog. The wife called Sita by Mann becomes Padmini in the play. Padmini means ‘Lotus’ which is taken to be the abode of Lakshmi, the Goddess of prosperity as well as the paradigm of feminine duty made well known by Vatsayana’s *Kamasutra*. While it is ironical that Padmini brings no prosperity to the friends with whom her lot is cast, her name also makes her the eternal female. The child named Samadhi Andhaka by Mann has no name in the play. The spirit-versus flesh-theme is not the one that Karnad wishes to stress, but also because it is an archetype. Both the main plot with a learned Brahmin Devadatta, the ironsmith Kapila, Padmini and the sub-plot with the story of the *Hayavadana*’s incompleteness blends with each other beautifully. The main plot is a folk tale and so is the sub-plot. Girish Karnad himself tells us about them in the main plot of the play:

*I remember that the idea of my play **Hayavadana** started crystallizing in my head right in the middle of an argument with B. V. Karanth (who ultimately produced the play) about the meaning of masks in Indian theatre and theatre's relationship to music. The play is based on a story from a collection of tales called the **Kathasaritsagara** and the further development of this story by Thomas Mann in **The Tranposed Heads**.<sup>4</sup>*

Hayavadana occupies a unique status in the humanistic vision of Karnad. First it encompasses three worlds of experience: the divine, the human and the animal. Within the human, the play includes the experiences of men, women and children as well as of the city and the wilderness. Second, the play presents the archetypal mother earth, teeming with desires for life and flowering of the lotus of love for perfection and completeness. Thirdly, Karnad's provision of the child in the modern world is commendable. Despite his alienation effects, sympathy is generated for Hayavadana who becomes a horse, and the child that learns to laugh. The tragedy of the adults is left behind and the comedy of the children is looked forward to. In the parable dealing with human longing for perfection, Hayavadana, neither a complete man nor a complete horse is a counter part to the story of Devadatta and Kapila. The latter, as the playwright posits, are not complete men. One is the symbol of mind-deficient in body and the other is the symbol of body-deficient in mind. Padmini herself is questing for perfections and her mute child is a corollary to this quest for perfection. The horse scene when the play opens gives the resemblance of a circus show and Bhagavata is made to appear like a ring-master. The confrontation of the actor (Nata) with the horse-headed man is both jocular and loud. Devadatta falls in love with Padmini. But he dares not propose her. He seeks the help of his friend named Kapila. He really argues and approaches Padmini on behalf of his friend Devadatta. As a result of it, the marriage of Devadatta and Padmini was celebrated. Kapila continues to visit his friend. His presence disturbs the marital life of his friend Devadatta because Padmini is attracted to Kapila. She starts praising Kapila in the presence of her husband. It results in his hatred for Kapila she is carried away by the muscular body of Kapila, which Devadatta lacks. Devadatta grows suspicious and jealous of his friend Kapila day by day. Before their marriage both of them praised the beauty of Padmini. Padmini has enthralled these two with her bewitching beauty. It is clear in their conversation:

*DEVA DATTA (Slowly): How can I describe her, Kapila? Her forelocks rival the bees, her face is ...*

*(All this is familiar to Kapila and he joins in, with great enjoyment.)*

*BOTH: ... is a white lotus. Her beauty is as the magic lake. Her arms the lotus creepers. Her breasts are golden urns and her waist ...*

*DEVA DATTA: No. No!*

*KAPILA: Eh?*

*DEVA DATTA: I was blind all these days. I deceived myself that I understood poetry. I didn't. I understood nothing.*

*BOTH: ... shikharidashana pakvabimbadharoshthee- Madhyekshama chakitaharinee prekshana nimnanabhih.*

*DEVA DATTA: The Shyama Nayika-born of Kalidasa's magic description-as Vatsyayana had dreamt her. Kapila, in a single appearance, she has become my guru in the poetry of love. Do you think she would ever assent to becoming my disciple in love itself?*

*KAPILA (aside): This is new!*

*DEVA DATTA (his eyes shining): If only she would consent to be my Muse, I could outshine Kalidasa. I'd always wanted to do that-but I thought it was impossible ... But now I see it is within my reach.*

*KAPILA: Then go ahead. Write...*

*DEVA DATTA: But how can I without her in front of me? How can I concentrate when my whole being is only thinking of her, craving for her? (p. 119-120).*

Neither does Karnad glorify the love of Devadatta, Padmini and Kapila, nor does he idealise the friendship of Devadatta and Kapila. He aims at presenting the conflicts and consequences attendant upon divided love with adequate psychological realism and personal symbolism. However, it seems that the psychological tensions of a woman in love with two men are not so significant dramatically as to be reflected in the title of the play. In spite of Kapila's admonition that Padmini is too high-spirited for him to tackle, Devadatta marries Padmini and settles down to domesticity. But Padmini is powerfully attracted towards Kapila whose physical prowess rivals his intellectual torpor. He is comparable, in Padmini's eyes, simultaneously to the ape and a celestial being; and she is potently moved by his physical anima or animal quality. Devadatta is aware of her attraction. He is jealous and the complication of the love-triangle begins here. In spite of Devadatta's objections, the trio undertake a journey to Ujjain at Padmini's insistence. She insists on going in the company of Kapila even at the risk of her pregnancy. Devadatta gives in for the sake of his wife and for his old friend whom he does not want to offend. The three reach the temple of Rudra on a bullock cart driven by Kapila. Devadatta realises that his conjugal life is in ruins, and kills himself at the temple of Kali. Padmini and Kapila intend to enjoy each other's company. When Padmini and Kapila have gone out, Devadatta made up his mind to commit suicide. It is seen in the fare-well message of Devadatta:

*DEVA DATTA: Good-bye, Kapila. Good-bye, Padmini. May lord Rudra bless you. You are two pieces of my heart-Live happily together. I shall find my eternal happiness in that thought. (Agonized.) Give me strength, Lord Rudra. My father, give me courage. I'm already trembling, I'd never thought I would be so afraid. Give me courage, Father, strengthen me.*

*(He walks to the temple of Kali. It's a steep and difficult climb. He is exhausted by the time he reaches the temple. He prostrates himself before the goddess.)*

*Bhavani, Bahiravi, Kali, Durga, Mahamaya, Mother of all Nature, I had forgotten my promise to you. Forgive me, Mother. You fulfilled the deepest craving of my life. You gave me Padmini-and I forgot my word. Forgive me, for I'm here now to carry out my promise.*

*(Picks up the sword.)*

*Great indeed is your mercy. Even in this lonely place some devotee of yours- a hunter perhaps or a tribesman- has left this weapon. Who knows how many lives this weapon has sacrifice to you. (Screaming.) Here, Mother Kali, here's another. My head. Take it, Mother, accept this little offering of my head.*

*(Cuts off his head. Not an easy thing to do. He struggles, groans, writhes. Ultimately succeeds in killing himself.*

*A long silence. Padmini and Kapila return to the cart.)*

pp. 136-137.

Lacan's concept of desire encompasses many of Freudian concepts like the libido, the Eros, the pleasure principles and wish fulfilment. He has advanced the idea of metonymic desire



because the unconscious desire is trapped in the endless chain of signification without signified. There may be several substitutions for the object of desire but desire remains unquenchable and insatiable. Padmini's desire in Hayavadana is precisely such a metonymic desire and the transposition of the heads of Devadatta and Kapila is only a symptom of her desire. Harland says:

Desire is caught in a multitude of mirrors: desire to take the place of the 'other' in desire (and love and admire 'I' from outside): desire to be what the 'other' desire (as when a woman desires to become the object a man desires); desire for the object's desire (as when a man desire a woman who is socially designated as desirable). Satisfiable need gets lost in the demand for love and admiration.<sup>5</sup>

Thus need changes to demand as demand changes to desire. Padmini felt vacuumed and was attracted to the manly smell of dusky complexioned Kapila. Devadatta smells the rat, but Padmini wanted to assure him by the holy thread of marriage:

*PADMINI: Look now. You got annoyed about Kapila. But why? You are my saffron, my marriage thread, my deity. Why should you feel disturbed? I like making fun of Kapila-he is such an innocent. Looks a proper devil, but the way he blushes and giggles and turns red, he might have been a bride.*  
(p. 129)

But ultimately Devadatta was disappointed by his wife's hidden amorous attraction for his friend. He remembers his promise to the Goddess Kali and the Lord Shiva to offer them his head and hands. Devadatta sacrifices himself to the Goddess Kali, offers his head to her, not his hand as promised. Kapila starts searching for his friend and finds him dead in the temple. Fearing that people will hold responsible for this death, he too beheads himself. Padmini too searches the site and finds her husband and his friend dead. Now there are two heads, two bodies lying in front of the Goddess Kali. The incompleteness of human beings is expressed by the exploitation of folk-tradition and ethnic riches. Like the characters of Samuel Beckett, these characters now seem to be complete 'halves' searching their 'others'. Padmini arrives at the scene. She prays to the Goddess Kali to bring them back to life. Kali grants her wish and empowers her to revive the two by joining their heads to the bodies. However, Padmini joins the head of Devadatta on the body of Kapila and vice-versa. They are brought back to life not in their earlier composition but with their heads transposed, an unconscious attempt of Padmini to attain completeness. Karanth observes:

*Padmini's unknowingly transfixing their heads, shows her deep-rooted liking for the mind of Devadatta and the body of Kapila. She endeavours to attain completeness but she could not because it is an inward thing ... and the fascination for the 'other' man is an age-old problem.*<sup>6</sup>

Devadatta's generosity and selflessness are mere a sham because the real reason of the sacrifice is his refusal to share Padmini with Kapila. Kapila says that he is sacrificing himself out of his love for his friend but actually he wants to avert the scandal due to Devadatta's death. That both Devadatta and Kapila were telling lies is made clear by Kali in the temple. As Kali points out:

*KALI: The rascals! They were lying to their last breaths. That fellow Devadatta-he had once promised his head to Rudra and his arms to me! Think of it-head to him and arms to me! Then because you insisted on going to the Rudra Temple, he comes here and offers his head. Nobly too-wants to keep his word, he says-no other reason!*

*Then this Kapila, died right in front of me-but 'for his friend'. Mind you! Didn't even have the courtesy to refer to me. And what lies! Says he is dying for friendship. He must have known perfectly well he would be accused of killing Devadatta for you. Do you think he wouldn't have grabbed you if it hadn't been for that fear? But till his last breath-'Oh my friend! My dear brother!'*

*Only you spoke the truth.*

(p. 142)

Only Padmini is true in what Kali says is her selfishness. She is bold and frank in demanding what will fulfil her. When Kali favours her with the blessing of life of the two friends; Padmini transposes the heads with the result that there are two men now-one with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body and the other with Kapila's head and Devadatta's body. She stumbles on the opportunity of having the best of the two men-Devadatta's head and Kapila's body. To resolve this dispute, they approach as Rishi living nearby who decides that the figure with Devadatta's head is the husband of Padmini. Feeling jubilant over the decision, Padmini goes with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body. The extraordinary situation helps Padmini to break out of the moral codes inflicted by society. She wants that her husband in life should be an ideal man-both in brain and body. She succeeds in having brain and body, the spirit and the flesh. Act one ends with Bhagavata's words:

*BHAGAVATA: What? What indeed is the solution to this problem, which holds the entire future of these three unfortunate beings in a balance? Must their fate remain a mystery? And if so shall we not be insulting our audience by trying a question mark round its neck and bidding it goodbye? We have to face the problem. But it's a deep one end and the answer must be sought with the greatest caution. Haste would be disastrous. So there's a break of ten minutes now. Please have some tea, ponder over this situation and come back with your own solutions. We shall then continue with our enquiry. (The stage-hands hold a white curtain in front of the frozen threesome, while the Bhagavata and others relax and sip tea.) (p.149)*

Indian Gods and Goddesses are endowed with human virtues and vices. The Goddess Kali laughs, smiles and feels sleepy:

*KALI (sleepy): Yes it's me. There was a time-many years ago-when at this hour they would have the mangalarati. The devotees used to make a deafening racket with drums and conch-shells and cymbals. So i used to be wide awake around now. I've lost the habit. (Yawns). Right. What do you want? Tell me. I'm pleased with you. (p.141)*

The thing that is focused at is that these Gods and Goddess shares the thirst of incompleteness with common human beings. Padmini picks up the way to put her life to its end after contemplating her condition in the society. She does not have even the strength to back off her head. She puts the point of the sword on her breast and is about to pierce herself when from behind the curtain the Goddess's voice is heard. Kali prevents her from doing so. This again is typical of Indian Gods and Goddesses getting awake at the climax point of sacrifices to their altar. Like all cultural texts, *Hayavadana* is resonant with multi-layered social messages. While it is difficult to reject the view of Padmini as a universalised patriarchal stereotype, it is also tempting to see her as volatile autonomous being-a kind of energy who turns upside down the

patriarchal order of society. Padmini is cast with a shadow of ambiguity. Her self-speaking and silence nonetheless also force us to discover moments of female transgression-disobedience of social laws. One would like to assume however, that in a situation of predicament between duty for Devadatta as a wife and love for Kapila, the act of transposing the wrong head must have been guided by some uncanny inner urge of the sub conscious. This act creates multiple problems. Since Padmini is a lawfully wedded-wife, she must go to Devadatta and also because as a mother-to-be, the paternity of her child is dependent on whom she chooses as a husband. The Bhagavata announces that in such a situation occurred previously, it was the mind/head that determined the identity of a person. Having Devadatta's head synonymous with social prestige and status of a wedded-wife, and Kapila's body- that she desperately desired, Padmini has now a complete man. In the play, *Hayavadana*, Goddess Kali has her divine score against the human beings again when Hayavadana goes to her, seeking completeness; before he completes his prayer for complete man the Goddess completes her sanction rather hastily and whimsically. Hayavadana becomes a complete horse much against his will. His completeness is not achieved because his human voice troubles him. Goddess Kali does not pay any heed to the helpless cries of Padmini to save her again. Kali's indifferent attitude (cruel attitude) is clear. It is a case of divine malignity towards the human beings. Karnad's characters tend to rebel against the orthodox, religious, social and political order. There is a feeling of discontentment in his mind that is due to the forces against man that tend to restrain the self. Padmini poses the same type of revolt. She rebels against the socially established idea that a married woman cannot love anybody else other than her husband. She marries Devadatta by choice but after coming in contact with his friend Kapila she finds a better husband in him. Unlike a traditional wife she is not a shy woman on her wedding night. Like Chitrlekha she refuses to play the role imposed on her by others. She has no hesitation to point it out in the presence of Devadatta that Kapila is better than him. When she gets the body of Kapila she would die for, she snubs him badly as he shows his claim over her. She even questions the Goddess Kali and is critical of the absurd human condition she is put into. Karnad tries to reveal through Padmini the predicament of a modern, free and bold woman who is torn between polarities. Her voice of challenge and revolt gains new dimensions when she again goes back to Kapila in the forest. Karnad also admits that tension was inherent in the age when he started writing, so he just inherited it. Tension is a necessary ingredient of all drama. Karnad as a playwright is more inclined to it:

*My generation was the first to come of age after India became independent of British rule. It therefore had to face a situation in which tension implicit until then had come out on the open and demanded to be resolved without apologia or self-justification: tension between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past between the attractions of western mode of thought and our own traditions, and finally between the various visions of the future that opened up once the common cause of political freedom was achieved. This is the historical context that gave rise to my plays and those of my contemporaries<sup>7</sup>.*

Girish Karnad deals with the power game of the eponymous character and the problems of self-alienation in *Hayavadana*. The play illustrates how the conventional solutions invariably fail. The protagonists in this play strive very hard and sacrifice everything to solve the problems. Their noble struggle meets with a fiasco on account of the mighty antagonism of our morbid culture and their wrong perception of the problems. Padmini attempts to obtain the perfect man without self-alienation, through the boon of Goddesses Kali but juxtaposition of a brilliant head

and a strong body is easily undone by the hegemony of the apollonian culture carried in the head. He also exploits the elements of *Yakshagana Bayalata* and folk theatre in *Hayavadana*. The key theme of the play is the Cartesian division between body and mind, intellect and instinct. In this tussle, the mind rules, a conclusion taken from the story of Vikram and Vetala in *Kathasarithsagara* as well as in *Vetalapanchavimshathi*. In the second act after the white curtain is removed, Bhagavata appears again and poses the same question regarding the superiority of head or body to the audience. Bhagavata sings:

*The future pointed out by the tongue  
safe inside the skull is not acceptable to us.  
We must read the forehead which Brahma  
has disconnected from the entrails.  
We must unravel the net on the palm  
Disclaimed by the brain.  
We must plumb the hidden depths of the  
rivers running under our veins.  
Yes, that would be the right thing to do.*

(p. 150)

The domination of intellect (head) over emotions is the centre of concentration in the play and this gains due attention from the audience too. The superiority of head as claimed by Devadatta over body is provided as the solutions by the king to the Madanasundari riddle story in *The Head that got Switched*, for the head rules the limbs and one's personal identity depends on the head. Picking examples from the past of India, Bhagavata raises a logical issue; that is whether the old beliefs appeal to the audience. The three friends went to a great Rishi who perhaps remembering what Vikram had said gave the solution that as head represents the body. Listening to the Rishi, Devadatta and Padmini scream with joy while Kapila is left broken hearted. Padmini pleads with Kapila to allow her to go and work with Devadatta. Kapila's response to Padmini not only reveals his mind set but also reflects her opinion. It is King Vikram's verdict that the Rishi has given:

*As the heavenly Kalpa Vriksha is supreme among trees, so is the head  
among human limbs. Therefore the man with Devadatta's head is indeed  
Devadatta and he is the rightful husband of Padmini.*

(p. 151)

Devadatta and Padmini go back to the city where Devadatta enjoys the benefits of Kapila's well-trained body for about a year. He succeeds in exploiting Kapila's body to his and Padmini's satisfaction. But after a year Devadatta's head fails to enjoy the liveliness of Kapila's body. Its litheness begins to wear off owing to the lack of physical labour. The mind that controls the body starts transforming the body making it lose all its virility. The changes in Devadatta's physical features are conveyed through the dolls. When Devadatta touches Doll I, it feels the change and comments:

*DOLL I: His palms! They were so rough once, when he first brought us here. Like  
a labourer's. But now they are soft-sticky soft-like a young girl's.* (p.  
158)

In the first act the supernatural element is the Goddess Kali who is used to reveal conscious motives behind the action of the three protagonists. Here he uses to animate dolls as a device to report to us from moment to moment what is going on in Padmini's mind. Her psychological reaction to the transformation in Devadatta is very economically communicated.

The sense of time passing is also given by making the dolls to report to each other what Padmini dreams, what reveries she indulges in. They also feel the change taking place in Devadatta. Karnad also uses the dolls as a device in the development of the plot. It is because the dolls get old that Padmini can send Devadatta to the Ujjain fair. He could have used the Bhagavata to narrate what is going on in Padmini's mind. But that would have affected his success in making her character individuated and generic (representative) at one and the same time. The Bhagavata has deeper knowledge of Padmini's nature. He knows what kind of person she is, as is clear from his comments when Padmini and Kapila meet in the forest. The last words of Padmini addressed to Kapila are significant in order to form an opinion about her character and her future course of action:

*PADMINI: Let's go. (Pause.) Wait. (She runs to Kapila.) Don't be sad Kapila we shall meet again, shan't we? (In a low voice, so Devadatta can't hear.) It's my duty to go with Devadatta. But remember I'm going with your body. Let that cheer you up. (Goes back to Devadatta.) Good-bye, Kapila.*

*(pp. 151-152)*

Bhagavata too consoles Kapila:

*BHAGAVATA: Kapila-Kapila . . . (No reply.) Don't grieve. It's fate, Kapila, and . . .*

*KAPILA: Kapila? What? Me? Why am I Kapila?*

*(Exits.)*

*BHAGAVATA: So the roads diverged. Kapila went into the forest and disappeared. He never saw Dharmapura again. In fact, he never felt the wind of any city again. As for Devadatta and Padmini, they returned to Dharmapura and plunged into the joys of married life.*

*(Padmini enters and sits. She is stitching clothes, Devadatta comes. He is carrying in his hands two large dolls-which could be played by two children. The dolls are dressed in a way which makes it impossible to decide their sex.*

*Devadatta comes in quietly and stands behind Padmini.) (p.152)*

The two dolls brought by Devadatta from the Ujjain fair converse with each other but they are inaudible to the other characters. They are happy that a rich person who has a good house buys them. But after Padmini gives birth to a son, they feel disgusted in the presence of a crying child. They also notice the change in the body of Devadatta. Slowly Devadatta's head with Kapila's body regains its former self-a delicate body. Padmini who had felt that she had the best of both the men gets slowly disillusioned. She has known Kapila's body with Devadatta's head. But that physicality in Devadatta is gone. Once again, she starts missing Kapila, his impulsiveness and his physicality. She has enjoyed it for a year but can't do so any more. Consequently, Devadatta loses Padmini to Kapila once again.

Kapila meanwhile has reminded in the forest to train the Brahmin's body hanging by his head like a corpse and shape it into form. Kapila cannot live by his head but by labour. He trains the brahmin's body by hard physical labour. Conferring superiority on head entails negation of body and this starts a conflict between the two. Both Devadatta and Kapila realize that sensuous pleasures of the body cannot be escaped. Padmini confirms this when she once again abandons Devadatta to stay with real Kapila who has trained Devadatta's body.

Practising deceit on her husband, she sends Devadatta to the Ujjain fair to fetch new dolls for the child and herself walks into the embrace of Kapila. She takes the child with her and

claims it to be the child of both Devadatta and Kapila. Padmini's visit disturbs Kapila. He had buried all those faceless memories but Padmini has dug them up. Padmini sings a lullaby:

*PADMINI: Here comes a rider!  
 From what land does he come?  
 Oh his head a turban  
 with a long pearly tail.  
 Round his neck a garland  
 of virgin-white jasmines.  
 In his fist a sword  
 With a diamond-studded hilt.  
 The white-clad rider  
 rides a white charger  
 which spreads its tossing mane  
 against the western sky,  
 spreads its mane like breakers  
 against the western sky.  
 Sleep now, my baby  
 and see smiling dreams  
 There he comes-here he is!  
 From which land does he come?  
 But why are the jasmines on his chest  
 red O so red?  
 What shine in his open eyes?  
 Pebbles O pebbles.  
 Why is his young body  
 cold O so cold?  
 The white horse gallops  
 across hills, streams and fields.  
 To what land does he gallop?  
 Nowhere O nowhere. (p. 159.)*

Padmini's son represents the future man achieving harmony not only between the mind and the body but also between himself and nature as represented by Hayavadana. Padmini fails to achieve the reunification of the mind and the body in Devadatta-Kapila. She realizes her mistake and perceives the real problem. She explains the problem to Kapila whose mind is frigid to the sensations of his body on account of self-alienation:

*PADMINI: Be quiet, stupid. Your body bathed in a river, swam and danced in it. Shouldn't your head know what river it was, what swim? Your head too must submerge in that river: the flow must rumple your hair, run its tongue in your ears and press your head to its bosom. Until that's done, you'll continue to be incomplete.*

*(Kapila raises his head and looks at her. She caresses his face, like a blind person trying to imprint it on her finger-tips. Then she rests her head on his chest.)*

*My Kapila! My poor, poor Kapila! How needlessly you've tortured yourself.  
 (Kapila lifts her up and take her in.)*

*(p.171)*

She wants to achieve her aim through her son. So she requests the Bhagavata to let her son be brought up as the son of Kapila by the hunters in the forest for five years and then as the son of Devadatta by Vidyasagara, her father-in-law and learned Brahmin. Thus she wants to provide both physical and mental training to her son so that he may attain unification. After passing her oral will to the Bhagavata, she commits sati on the pyre of Devadatta and Kapila who have died in a duel. Thus she ends her life of alienation and averts the possible dilution of her will.

Padmini's son is brought to the Bhagavata again after five years. He is as morose as Kapila after his transposition. Hayavadana who becomes a complete horse comes and expresses his grief over his human voice. When he laughs with human voice, Padmini's son throws away his dolls and starts laughing and clapping as if he were freed from a spell. Similarly Hayavadana loses human voice when Padmini's son rides him and sings a nursery rhyme. Thus Hayavadana and Padmini's son symbolizing the primal unity and the final unity respectively attained Dionysian ego. Padmini thus succeeds in achieving her aim posthumously.

Devadatta resumes his Brahminical lifestyle and gradually loses the physical vigour of Kapila's body. Padmini asks him why he does not go out. He replies that he has to observe his duty as a Brahmin. Similarly, Kapila's head carries the attributes of a crafts man and athlete. He does hard work and regains his physical vigour. Thus he gradually loses the softness and weakness of Devadatta's body. Padmini loses interest in Devadatta on account of his weak, soft body with a pot-belly. Her unconscious mind longs for a Kapila. She sees Kapila vaguely in her dreams and the dolls talk about it. Padmini meets Kapila who realises the power of the head. The conflict between the mind and the body is more acute in Kapila than in Devadatta. Devadatta, after discontinuing his physical exercise, often feels like going to the gymnasium. He gets body pains and decides not to do any physical exercise anymore. Then he over comes the memories of Kapila's body. But Kapila really has a very hard task to overcome the erotic memories of Devadatta's body though he succeeds in making the body strong through physical exercises:

*One beats the body into shape, but one can't beat away the memories trapped in it. Isn't that surprising? That the body should have its own ghosts, its own secrets...swaying in these arms...which one cannot recognize, cannot understand, cannot even name because this head wasn't there when they happened.*

(pp. 170-171)

Kapila asks Padmini to go to Devadatta but she requests him to allow her to stay there and look at him for a while. Later, Devadatta comes and asks Kapila whether he also loves Padmini. Kapila answers him affirmatively and suggests that they live like the five Pandavas and Draupadi of *The Mahabharata*. As Padmini does not consent to this, they fight a duel and kill each other. The old friends fight as rivals, now not for victory but for the death at each other's hands. In a dance like ritualistic duel, they kill each other. Padmini performs the 'sati' rites on the funeral pyre of the two friends not sure whose 'sati' she is. Their fight is stylized like a dance. It is seen in Bhagavata's song:

*BHAGAVATA (sings): Like cocks in a pit  
 we dance- he and I,  
 foot woven with foot  
 eye soldered to eye.  
 He knows and I know*

*all there's to be known:  
 the witch's burning thirst  
 burns for blood alone.  
 Hence this frozen smile,  
 which cracks and drips to earth,  
 and claw-knives, digging flesh  
 for piecemeal death.  
 (pp. 175-176)*

When both fight and die in each other's hands, Padmini slowly comes and sits between the dead bodies. She cannot digest this horrible truth. The conclusion which could be arrived at is that everyone has his/her own way of feeling complete but the basic concept which runs everywhere is that one should be comprehensive and think of the world as his or her own. There must be a detached attachment. One should feel the world as a celebration and feel complete in his own way. Since Padmini fails in it, she fails in her life. She feels as vacant as she has been in the beginning. Padmini's preference of doing 'sati' and her plan for her now exposes that her quest for fulfilment is to go beyond life. The predicament of human being is to remain incomplete, imperfect and unfulfilled and if there is any perfection it lies within the terms and conditions of society and grace of divine being. Before the performance of the ritual of 'sati' Padmini asks Bhagavata to take her son under his care and tells him to bring him up in the forest for five years and then send him to the city to Devadatta's home. She wants her son to be a perfect human being. The conversation between Bhagavata and Padmini makes it clear:

*PADMINI: They burned, lived, fought, embraced and died. I stood silent. If I'd said, 'Yes, I'll live with you both,' perhaps they would have been alive yet. But I couldn't say it. I couldn't say 'Yes'. No Kapila, no Devadatta. I know it in my blood you couldn't have lived together. You would've had to share not only me but your bodies as well. Because you knew death you died in each other's arms. You could only have lived ripping each other to pieces. I had driven you to death. You forgave each other, but again, left me out.*

*BHAGAVATA (without leaving his seat): What is this? It's a sight to freeze the blood in one's vein. What happened, child? Can we help you?*

*PADMINI (without looking at him): Yes, please. My son is sleeping in the hut. Take him under your care. Give him to the hunters who live in this forest and tell them it's Kapila's son. They love Kapila and will bring the child up. Let the child grow up in the forest with the rivers and the trees. When he's five take him to the Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara of Dharmapura. Tell him it's Devadatta's son.*

*(p. 176)*

A strong admixture of the comic elements has always been a feature of our folk drama. This comic element covers the entire spectrum of humour ranging from farce and slapstick to irony and wit. Bhagavata is instrumental in introducing a lot of comedy in the play, which partly prevents the play from being considered a tragedy, despite the deaths of the three main characters. Thus, Bhagavata also becomes a Brechtian type of narrator figure, who is primarily interested in drawing the audience to the play, by arousing their curiosity and by linking the folklore to contemporary times, creating a sense of timelessness. A sense of urbanity, in spite of the folk devices, a sense of alienation despite the tragic deaths of the three characters, a sense of watching contemporary theatre with a man like us, sipping tea on the stage, making relevant



political remarks and pinching satires, could not be better achieved but by the introduction of the Brechtian Bhagavata of our very own traditional theatre, who adds so much to the desired alienation effect. The child grows as Kapila's child in the forest to be delivered as Devadatta's at the age of five into the city combines in him the thematic strands of the main plot and the sub-plot. When he is given over to a traveller going to the city to be delivered into the hands of his grandparents, he is found not to be able to laugh like a human child. He laughs only when the horse born of a princess and gandharva cursed to live like a horse until he loved a human, laughs a real laughter in his attempt to make the child laugh. The interpolated stories, the fairy tale characters, the circus antics, the songs and dances together become Karnad's mode of rendering a comic angle to the travail, tribulation in a desire-ridden world. The primal freedom of Hayavadana and the song of innocence could give mankind some hope. In the primitive man, the body and the mind are in perfectly harmony which Brown calls Dionysian ego. As man has been vainly striving to be above biological principles for ages, he has evolved Apollonian culture which causes alienation. Devadatta and Kapila like the people of modern society are the victims of self-alienation while Hayavadana, his mother and Padmini's son attain Dionysian ego (the undifferentiated body-mind). The deaths of Devadatta and Kapila, and the 'sati' of Padmini reveal the logic of the absurdity of situation. Naik says:

*Karnad does not succeed fully in investing the basic conflict in the play with the required intensity, but his technical experiment with an indigenous dramatic form here is a triumph which has opened up fresh lines of fruitful exploration for the Indian English playwright.*<sup>8</sup>

The plots of *Tughlaq* and *Hayavadana* are precise, well knit and are noticeable for architectonic quality. Various events and actions of characters contribute to the unity of effect. Karnad's characters are vividly delineated. He observes economy, precision and concentration in portraying his characters. He emphasises those qualities of his characters, which are needed for the development of plot. Karnad follows the rule that every character should be so presented as to appear absolutely adequate to all the demands which the plot makes upon it. Karnad also employs the devices of contrast, irony and parallelism for character portrayal. Characterisation and plot are correlated in the plays of Karnad and only those points of character are emphasised, which develop the plot.

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