

:: STRUCTURE ::**16.0 Objectives****16.1 *Hayavadana*: Major Themes****16.2 *Hayavadana*: Symbols and Motifs**

- **Check Your Progress**

16.3 *Hayavadana*: Critical Analysis

- **Check Your Progress**

- ❖ **Answers**

16.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are

1. To discuss the major themes of *Hayavadana*
2. To discuss the Symbols, Allegory and Motifs of *Hayavadana*
3. To discuss the writing style of *Hayavadana*
4. To discuss critical analysis of *Hayavadana*

16.1 HAYAVADANA: MAJOR THEMES

Theme of Hybridity

Girish Karnad reveals hybridity in the play *Hayavadana* in most decorative traditions. Hybridity is not similar to the advanced version of postcolonial hybridity. Girish Karnard portrays hybridity as a basic perception. The play begins with the invocation of Lord Ganesha. In Hindu mythology it is a belief to pray Lord Ganesh and lighting up a lamp. Ganesha is the God who prevents us from the obstacles. Lord Ganesha's physical appearance does not portray perfection. The mask of Ganesha on the stage represents that the fragmentation is not always incomplete or awful. As the play moves forward the title character, Hayavadana, appears. Hayavadana is also a hybridized character having a head of horse and body of human. He was born from a woman who married to a horse. Later in the play appears Devadatta and Kapila. After the sacrifice of their heads in the temple of goddess Kali they both were made alive by the goddess Kali. But transposition of their heads went wrong. Devadatta's head was attached to Kapila's body and Kapila's head was attached to Devadatta's body which made them hybridized.

Further, as the play moves forward, these characters seem less perfect. Their imperfection reflects because of their hybridization.

Theme of Incompleteness

The theme of incompleteness reflects in almost every character. The character of Devadatta reflects intelligence whereas the character of Kapila reflects strength. Both the characters are not truly complete. This incompleteness is reflected by the character of Padmini. Padmini marries Devadatta as Devadatta is intellectual but even after marriage she is craving for Kapila's physicality. She is abandoned by both the men twice which makes her feel incomplete.

However, Devadatta and Kapila both feel the incompleteness when their bodies are interchanged. Initially it reflects that Devadatta is in a better position as he gets the body of Kapila along with his own brain which makes him complete. But later his body starts to get in the same shape which it used to be. Further Kapila gets the body of Devadatta which makes him more unathletic and soft like Devadatta. It gives him the feeling of incompleteness. However, when both the men realize that their bodies are getting into their prior state, still they both are feeling incompleteness as they realize their half existences.

One of the fine examples of the incompleteness is Hayavadana. Hayavadana wants to become a complete man as he is half horse and half man. He prays to goddess Kali, but she makes him a complete horse instead of a man. Even after Goddess makes him a complete horse, he feels the incompleteness as he still possesses the voice of a human. He feels complete when he finally achieves his "neigh" of horse in the end.

Conflict between Body and Mind

The play reflects the question that which is more powerful, the mind or the body. It is, by all respect, the mind, as it is reflected in the experiences of Devadatta, Kapila and Hayavadana. But Girish Karnad also indicates that the human body seems to have more ability than one may think. The human body consists of memory which persistently opposes the mind's attempt to control it. The physical interaction of the body with the world leaves a trace within it, and when in view of this as well as the supposed dominance of the brain, one must understand that both the parts are equally important to have a complete identity.

Subversiveness of Women

The character of Padmini, in one way, portrayed as a traditional woman of Indian society who is a wife and a mother, but she is very open about her choices. She goes for the things she likes. Padmini is married to Devadatta but she craves for Kapila's body for which she tries to pursue. She is a sensual and desiring woman who follows her desires and goes after what she loves and like. Karnad expresses her subversion through her own dialogues as well as those of the Female Chorus, which

expresses her dissatisfaction with her marital existence. Her sharp language and subversiveness present her as more than any of the common woman. She is the only character who is close to the “completeness” in compare to the all other characters.

16.2 HAYAVADANA: SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS

Symbols:

1. The Flower

The flower “The Fortunate Lady” which Devadatta shows to Padmini is a symbol of Padmini. It reflects the features similar to a married woman like parted hair, mark on the forehead and a necklace. Just like a beautiful woman it is seductive and lovely, sensual and opulent. Bhagavata, at the conclusion of the play, reminds the spectators that the flower “The Fortunate Lady” plant emits a delightful fragrance and sing on the full moon night, resembling Padmini and her splendid but tragic death for love.

2. Dolls

Dolls have long been associated with childhood. They are toys that are eerily similar to children and are designed to teach nurturing and sympathy qualities. They are identified with the child in this play, having been acquired during the time of his birth and then kept until fresh ones are purchased later. Karnad, on the other hand, flips the symbol on its head by making these dolls incredibly alive, as well as catty, vicious, and selfish. This does not necessarily reflect negatively on the youngster, but rather on his parents, who brought the dolls into the house.

3. Padmini’s Door

Above Padmini's entrance of the house is a two-headed bird, which represents her division between Devadatta and Kapila. She cannot seem to reconcile her desires for Kapila's body and Devadatta's brain, and since both men are so stuck in their incompleteness, she cannot seem to choose between them.

Motifs:

1. Switching Heads

Switching heads is a key motif in the concepts of incompleteness and hybridism. The god Ganesha, who has the head of an elephant and the body of a child, is the first character introduced in Bhagavat. Hayavadana, who possesses the body of a man and the head of a horse, is the next character the audience sees in person.

Initially Devadatta and Kapila both have had their heads properly connected to their own body but When goddess Kali ask Padmini to put the head of Devadatta and Kapila, who is died by sacrificing their head in the temple of goddess Kali, Padmini in excitement joined the heads with the wrong body. It reflects the incompleteness of both the male characters

16.3 HAYAVADANA: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Hayavadana, which literally means "horse-head," is one of Girish Karnad's most outstanding masterpieces. It is an apt example of the "theatre of roots," since it is amusing, deep, and a fusion of Indian dramatic themes, structures, and stories with aspects of the Western. Initially it was written in Kannada language and later translated into English by Karnad himself. The inspiration of the play is *Kathasaritasagara* and *The Transposed Head* by Thomas Mann. Whether the themes of his all three plays Tughlaq, Yayati and Hayavadana are legendary, mythical or historical, Karnad's approach is modern in all the three plays. He brilliantly employs folk-art conventions and motifs such as masks and curtains to create a world of intensity, uncertainty, and unpredictability.

Bhagavata appears at the beginning of the play. Bhagavata is a character who is worshipping the god Vishnu. He is the director, narrator and guide of the play who is commenting on the characters, actors and even the audience. Girish Karnad represents Bhagavata's character as a more prominent character as it reflects the different layers of the theatre experience for instance while narrating the story, he often communicates to the audience too and when the other characters appear on the stage, they perform their act as if it is real. "What do you mean by all this shouting and screaming? In front of our audience too!" (Karnad, 74)

There is a divergence between what the audience perceives to be the play and what they believe to be reality. The play begins with the invocation of Lord Ganesha, the god with the human body and a head of elephant. He ponders on the appearance of the god "the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness" (73), still how we worship him nonetheless. This is a great teaching that

"the completeness of God is something no poor mortal can comprehend... It is not for us to understand this Mystery or try to unravel it. Nor is it within our power to do so" (Karnad, 73).

From the Karnad's point of view the representation of Lord Ganesha is not a mere allusion, but the figure that anticipates the themes and the events that take place in the play. Dr. Amara Khan in her research paper titled *Girish Karnad's Hayavadana: Analysis of Text and its Theatrical Performance* published in *Journal of Research in Humanities* asserts that

"In this framework, Karnad has used the mask of Ganesha to announce another incomplete character that is Hayavadana. Karnad presents Ganesha as an outer agency for ensuring the success of the play and to design the play in traditional Yakshagana form. In the text of Hayavadana we perceive that at the very beginning of the play, it is through the mask of Ganesha that hybridity is offered as the best solution for life."(144)

A character having similar features like Lord Ganesha, Hayavadana, appears after this invocation at the beginning of the play. A creature who

appears to be a human from the body it possesses and a horse from the face it has. The fusion of animal and human. The one whose desire of being complete is fulfilled at the end of the play.

Moreover, Yakshagana theatre also represents stylized action, of which Dr Amara Khan writes "this technique constantly reminds the audience that they are watching a play and not a slice of life, resulting in some amount of distance between the play and the audience psychologically."

Furthermore, Bhagavata unfolds the story of two friends, Devadatta and Kapila. Hayavadana interferes between the story. The tale of Hayavadana is nothing but a sub-plot. It is left unsaid once the story of Devadatta and Kapila starts. At the end of the play it continues and ends with the Hayavadana turning out to be a complete horse. Girish Karnad has intertwined the plot with the sub-plot. He explained that he would "always felt tremendous fascination for Shakespeare's sub-plots - how he tells us the same story twice, from two different points of view." We notice these stories appearing parallelly in the play.

Devadatta and Kapila are very good friends. Devadatta is intellectual while Kapila is physically strong. Devadatta marries Padmini when both realize love for each other. Later in the play Kapila falls in love with Padmini. To cope with the situation both friends sacrifice their life in the temple of goddess Kali. Goddess Kali appears. She asks Padmini to put their heads near their body so that goddess Kali can rejoin their heads and make them alive with her godly powers. Mistakenly Padmini joins the heads with wrong bodies. This results in confusion with their identities. At the end of the play both led to a duel which results in the death of both the protagonists of the play. Padmini performs sati after their deaths. Even without the psychological element, it's a fascinating story, and Karnad does an excellent job of bringing it to life.

Hayavadana is one of the most remarkable works of Girish Karnad. The story of *Hayavadana* is inspired from the ancient Sanskrit work *Kathasarisagar*. The story of Devadatta and Kapila is inspired from the ancient Indian tale "*Betal Panchbinsati*" whereas the plot he portrayed is borrowed from the work of Thomas Mann which is the retelling of story in *The Transposed Head*. Mann's adaptation of a Sanskrit story told by a ghost to an adventurous king takes on a new mock-heroic dimension. Mann uses the story to mock the mechanical notion of life that distinguishes between body and soul, whereas the original story poses a moral dilemma. He mocks the philosophy that places the head above the body.

Mann claims that the human body is an instrument for the fulfilment of human destiny. Even the reversal of heads did not free the characters from nature's physiological constraints. Karnad's work tackles a distinct issue: individual identity in a world of complicated relationships. When the play begins, Devadatta and Kapila are described by Bhagavata as

"close friends with one thought and one heart." Kapila is a man of the body, whereas Devadatta is a man of the mind. When Devadatta marries Padmini, their relationship becomes more complicated.

Later in the play it is acknowledged that Kapila starts falling in love with Padmini. As Padmini is also craving for his physicality she too acknowledges her desire for him. When Devadatta realises Padmini's love for Kapila he sacrifices his life in the temple of goddess kali. Soon Kapila also sacrifice his life knowing his friend is died because of him. When Padmini tries to sacrifice her life too goddess kali appears and ask her to put their heads in front of their bodies. Padmini in excitement transposes their heads which results in Kapila's body having Devadatta's head and Devadatta's body having Kapila's head. Padmini's desire is fulfilled by swiping the heads.

As a result, identities are muddled, revealing the uncertain essence of human personality. Initially, Devadatta (Devadatta's head on Kapila's body) behaves in a different manner than previously. However, he gradually reverts to his previous state. Kapila, like Devadatta, is a quick learner. There is, however, an important distinction to be made. Devadatta, unlike his nature, stop reading and writing poetry. Kapila too is haunted by the memories of the body of Devadatta.

After transposing heads Padmini feels that she is having the best of both the man which later turns out to be a big disappointment. She is the one who has experienced this situation completely. Now she acknowledges the situation in which she has drowned herself but cannot control it.

The duel that takes place at the end of the story results in the death of both the protagonists. furthermore, Padmini sacrifice her life by performing sati ritual. The death of all the three central characters is not represented in a tragic way. The death of these characters signifies the rationality. How absurd the situation is.

The motifs and symbols of folk theatre marks and folk tales, dolls, curtain and the story within a story used in the play is to create a peculiar world. Karnad portrays a plot which revolves around an incomplete world of the individual characters, gods that are indifferent, dolls that can speak and children who cannot utter a single word. The horse is the only character that has tremendous and absurd energy whereas the character of the horse-rider who is roaming around the stage emphasizes the powerful but monotonous rhythm of life.

Check Your Progress

Q. 1 Girish Karnad's Hayavadana is inspired from the ancient Indian collection of folk tales and fairy tales. What is the name of book?

Q. 2 What does Hayavadana means?

Q. 3 Hayavadana is an example of which Indian movement?

Q. 4 Girish Karnad was an admirer of Which Indian theatre during his childhood?

Q. 5 Which substances are used in the play to make it more peculiar?

❖ ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

Ans. 1 Lord Ganesha

Ans. 2 Goddess Kali

Ans. 3 Horse

Ans. 4 Physicality

Ans. 5 Devadatta and Kapila

Ans. 6 Padmini

Ans. 7 Hybridity

Ans. 8 Padmini

Ans. 9 Horse

Ans. 10 The Fortunate Lady

Check Your Progress: 2

Ans. 1 Kathasaritsagar

Ans. 2 Horse Head

Ans. 3 Theatre Root Movement

Ans. 4 Yakshagana Theatre

Ans. 5 folk theatre marks and folk tales, dolls, curtain and the story within a story