

**Research Paper****GIRISH KARNAD'S HAYAVADANA : A STUDY OF BODY- MIND POWER CONFLICT****Dr. Shibani Basu Dubey**Asstt. Professor (Department of PG Studies in English)  
Mata Gujri Mahila Mahavidyalaya (Autonomous), Jabalpur**\*Corresponding Author****Received 05-01-2016; Revised 14-01-2016; Accepted 25-01-2016****ABSTRACT**

Karnad's play Hayavadana, puts forward a different problem, the identification of a human being in this world of strange relationships. The theme of the play is a complex one and Karnad, good-humouredly yet critically, manipulates the very concepts of the rational and the physical. The multiplicity of characters and their individual psyche circles playing into each other build up a complex pattern of human relationship. And by projecting these human sympathies against a gradually intensifying clash of personalities, Karnad presents a comprehensive picture of the human living in the search for perfection and completeness, which would further enhance power and glory.

**Introduction**

Hayavadana is the third successful drama of Girish Karnad written in 1975. Karnad's play puts forward a different problem, the identification of a human being in this world of strange relationships.

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**Power conflict in the play**

The play opens with the invocation of Lord Ganesh who is lord of

“Riddhi and Siddhi,” and “destroyer of incompleteness,” to put it other way “the give of completeness and power.” Bhagavata is something of a chorus, commenting upon the theme of the play. He is surprised to note that Ganesha who is incomplete every way in physical features is the God of Completeness- “An elephant’s head on a human body, broken tusk, and a creaked belly- whenever you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incomplete-ness. 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 and power”? But he soon answers that completeness is beyond imagination of man- “Could it be that this image of Purity and Holiness, the Mangalamoorti, intends to signify by his very appearance that the completeness of God is something that no poor mortal can comprehend.” Only God is Almighty. Bhagavata leaves it at this stage without trying to probe into the mystery.

But he has set the tone of the play, besides making a beginning with an invocation formally in Hindu tradition. Then he proceeds to tell us the story of the two youths, Devandatta and Kapila, living in the city of Dharamapura, and ruled by the King Dharamsheela. Devadatta is the son of the reverend Brahmin, Vidya Sagar. He has conquered the mightiest pundits in

the kingdom in debates on logic and love, and greatest of the poets of the world with his poetry and wit. Thus Devandatta represents the acme of intellect, the power of intelligence.

The other youth, Kapila, is the only son of an ironsmith, Lohita. Kapila is dark and plain to look at, yet in deeds requiring drive and daring, in dancing, in strength, and in physical skills, he has no equal. He therefore presents the ultimate in physical prowess. The two youths that are complementary to each other, are bosom friends.

An Actor who comes bewildered and terrified by a horse speaking like a man interrupts the story. Bhagavata disbelieves it and thinks that the Actor has had an illusion under the influence of opium. But soon Hayavadana, the man with horse’s mane appears. Hayavadana becomes Gandharva, turned into a stallion. After 15 years of married life he turned into a Gandharva. When he was going back to Heaven, he asked his wife to go with him but she refused. Hayavadana being the son of the princess-mother and stallion-Gandharva father got the head of a horse and body of a man. Now he wants to be rid of the horse’s head. Bhagavata advises him to go on a pilgrimage to make him free of the oddity. This episode is suggestive again of man’s incomplete powers and his every-cherished dreams to gain complete power.

After Hayavadana has gone off the stage, the thread of the main plot is picked up. Kapila talks about his wrestling excellence but Devadatta is lost in thoughts of a girl he has recently seen going into a house the door of which has a double-headed bird engraved on it. Kapila is so good a friend that he cannot bear the sight of his friend distraught in the love of a girl. Kapila goes in search of the girl, but when he saw Padmini, her beauty struck him. Power of physical beauty is exemplified here. Nevertheless he acted like a loyal friend and eventually succeeded in getting Padmini married to Devadatta. It is a marriage of learning and wealth. "Padmini is the daughter of the leading merchant in Dharmapura. In her house, the Goddess of wealth sweeps the very floor. In Devadatta's house, they have the Goddess of learning for a maid." This marriage brought all three of them closer- "The old friendship flourished as before. Devadatta- Padmini- Kapila!. To the admiring citizens of Dharmapura, Rama-Sita-Lakshmana.' (Act.II)

The loving trio goes on a trip against the wishes of Devadatta. As Padmini is pregnant he does not want her to face the hazard of a journey by cart. He argues, "The cart will probably shake like an earthquake. It is dangerous in your condition." (Act.II) At the same time Devadatta does not want any interference in his married life by Kapila. He tells Padmini, "Kapila isn't

merely a friend-he's like my brother. One has to collect merit in seven lives to get a friend like him. But is it wrong for me to want to read to you alone- or to spend a couple of days with you without anyone else around?" (Act.II) Apparently there is nothing incriminating, but deeper down Devadatta is a jealous husband, Padmini has read his thoughts. She says plainly, "You aren't jealous of him, are you?" (Act.II) Both of them decide to cancel the trip, but to the surprise of Devadatta, Padmini changes her mind at the eleventh hour, and they all set out for Ujjain by a cart driven by Kapila.

On the way, Padmini is taken strongly by Kapila's skill in driving a cart, his strong powerful muscles, his agility, and his efforts to keep her cheerful added to her admiration. Padmini's fascination for Kapila could not remain hidden from Devadatta. He says to himself- "And why should I blame her? It's his strong body- his manly muscles... Look, how she's pouring her soul in his mould." (Act.II) He feels powerless. Devadatta's agony is increased as Padmini praises Kapila openly for his dexterity in driving- "What a terrible road, nothing but stones and rocks-but one didn't feel a thing in the cart! You drove it so gently-almost made it float. I remember when Devadatta took me in a cart that was soon after our marriage- I insisted on being shown the lake outside the city. So we started only the two of us. And

we didn't even cross the city gates. The oxen looked at everything except the road. He only had to pull to the right, and off they would rush to the left! I have never laughed so much in life. But of course he got very angry. So we had to go back home straight." (Act.III)

On their way to Ujjain they come to the Temple of Kali. Padmini expresses her desire to go to the temple, but Devadatta refuses to accompany her due to disgust, and asks Kapila to escort her. He says, "Good-bye Kapila, Good-bye Padmini. May the Lord Rudra bless you. You are two pieces of my heart- live happily together. I shall find my happiness in that." (Act-III) This remark indicated that Devadatta is deeply hurt by Padmini's infatuation for Kapila. He starts feeling inferior and powerless and sacrifices his desires so as to get some kind of satisfaction.

But as Padmini and Kapila set out for the temple, he also goes to the temple of Kali to fulfil his promise to the Goddess that he would come to bow before her if he succeeded in getting Padmini. Going towards the temple, he finds an abandoned sword. He cuts off his head to offer it to Goddess Kali. Kapila goes in search of Devadatta but he finds his truncated body. Kapila also cuts off his head in remorse and repentance. Padmini is aghast to see the dead bodies of the two friends. She also proposes to go their way but Goddess Kali forbids her to do so, and asks her- "Put these heads back

properly. Attach them to their bodies and then press that sword on their necks. They will come up alive. Is that enough?" (Act.III).

Padmini requests the Goddess why she didn't check the two friends from committing suicide if she now condescends to revive them. Kali tells her that both the friends 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 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 fairly well that 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!'"(Act.IV) Again a face off for Kapila.

It happens very often in real life that a man acts differently from what he professes. Only a goddess knows what is the real motive behind an act. However, Padmini puts the heads on the two bodies, but in her excitement she puts Devadatta's head on Kapila's body and vice versa. This act of Padmini is dubious. It is perhaps because she craves for perfection and wants a complete and powerful man for her husband. Then she presses the sword

on their necks exactly according to the instructions of the Goddess.

Now as they come alive, they find themselves in the soup. The politicking for the power to possess Padmini starts now. Kapila wants Padmini to go with him since she was married to Devadatta's body, which he possesses now. But Devadatta says "... Head is the sign of man..." (Act.IV) But Kapila says showing his hand, "This is the hand that accepted her at the wedding." Now it becomes a ticklish question. The two friends make claims and counterclaims to the hand of Padmini. Finally, Devadatta takes her away.

Kapila is left fuming and threatening- "Go. But do you think I will stay put while you run away with my wife? Where will you go? How far can you go? I'll follow you there. I'll kick up a row in the streets. Let us see what happens then?" (Act.I) He is ready to use physical power also to win.

In Act II effort is made to resolve the problem as to whom Padmini belongs. The writer says that Vaital posed such a question to Vikramaditya. But the rational answer given in the "sacred text" will not be acceptable to the characters and audience. "The future pointed out by the tongue safe inside the skull is not acceptable to us."<sup>33</sup> All the three unfortunate friends went to a Rishi, who knew the text, answered - "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." Padmini is happy as she enjoys the better of the two friends- head of Devadatta and body of Kapila. "Fabulous body- fabulous brain- Fabulous Devadatta." (Act.II) In the initial stage of this new dispensation, Devadatta had an aptitude for physical exercises. He says, "Funny things happened - there was a wrestling pit and a wrestler from Gandhara was challenging people to fight him. I don't know what got into me- before I'd even realized it, I had stripped, put on the paint given by his assistant and jumped into the pit.... Within a couple of minutes I had pinned him to the ground." (Act-II)

But this tale does not last long. Soon the Brahmin in Devadatta rises to outstrip Kapila, the muscle man. He turns to books, scriptures, etc which he was fond of from the beginning - "All that muscle and strength. But how long can one go on like that? I have the family tradition to maintain the daily reading, writing and studies..." (Act.III)

Padmini is disappointed to mark that he is 'going soft again' and losing his muscles. Change is bound to come with the passage of time. That the wheel of time does not stop is a truth, which everybody realizes. Change coming over Devadatta is not liked by Padmini. She yearns for virility of Kapila.

That amalgam of the best of brain and best of physique is decomposed.

She cannot help meeting Kapila. Therefore she sends Devadatta rather forcibly to Ujjain fair on a flimsy errand to buy dolls for the child to get an opportunity to meet Kapila.

Kapila is living like a recluse, cut off from his native place so completely that he even does not have the information about the death of his father and mother. He is visibly upset by the news that Padmini has got a child. In Kapila's case also the head has brought the change in body language. It is no more the body of Devadatta, "like a corpse hanging by my head. It was a Brahmin's body after all, not made for the woods. I couldn't lift an axe without my elbows moaning, couldn't run a length without my knees howling. I had no use for it. The moment it came to me, a war started between us." (Act.V) The war obviously is between the head and the body, and as it is always the mind that controls and directs the body, mind wins the race. Kapila has again a stout body as he had in the past – "Now I can run ten miles and not stop for breath. I can swim through the monsoon floods and fell a banyan. The stomach used to rebel once- now it digests what I give." (Act.V)

Padmini is all admiration for this new Kapila that has arisen from the ashes. She thinks that in this triangular love affair she is the only person that is the loser in the game. The other two- Kapila and Devadatta have won in their own ways, as both of them have shown

that they can regain their lost strength by sheer grit and determination, but she has failed to achieve her wish. Mind is all- powerful. The intellect rules the body. In a way she fails to get either Devadatta or Kapila and that is why she turns from Devadatta to Kapila and vice versa to satisfy the craving of her soul.

Kapila grows restless. He feels that re-entry of Padmini in his life has activated the dormant volcano of old memories. "Memories of a touch – memories of a body swaying in these arms, of a warm skin against this palm – memories which one cannot recognize, cannot understand, cannot even name because this head wasn't there when they happened..." (Act.IV) Kapila is in a state of utter confusion, because these are only physical experiences of the body of Devadatta, which he has got now by a strange dispensation. This mind that he has now has not partaken of the experiences of the body, yet even purely physical experiences become irresistible – "You held my hand- and my body recognized your touch. I have never touched you, but his body, this appendage laughed and flowered out in a festival of memories to which I am an outcaste...." (Act.IV) The gap between body and mind is to be bridged in order to be at peace with one's self, and to be a complete personality. The physical experiences are to be shared by mind also. Padmini admonishes. "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 submerged in the river- the flow must rumple your hair, run its tongue in your ears and press your head to its bosom. Until that is done, you will continue to be incomplete.” (Act IV) Saying this, she caresses his face, like a blind person, trying to imprint her fingertips on it. Then she rests her head on his chest to let his mind also share the experiences of his body. To create harmony between mind and body, to let the mind study, analyze, and control the physical life, but the vice-versa will upset the Nature’s apple cart- Man will become a brute, a Samson will lie blinded by physical temptations.

Devadatta returns from the fair, yearning to taste the blood of Kapila. Because his mind is obsessed with the idea of possibility of Padmini going to Kapila in his absence. When he reaches Kapil’s hut, he asks Kapila whether he loves Padmini. On getting an affirmative reply, Devadatta is at his wit’s end as to how this tangle is to be resolved. Kapila asks whether they can live like five Pandavas with one Draupadi, but Devadatta dismisses the suggestion offhand and proposes to end the nagging situation by killing each other. Eventually they do it.

Now Padmini decides to perform Sati, leaving her son under the care of Bhagavata with the request to give him (her son) to the hunters who live in the forest and tell them it is Kapila’s son.

They love Kapila and would bring up the child. Let the child grow up in the forest with rivers and trees. When he is five take him to the Reverend Brahmin Vidyasagar of Dharampura. Tell him it is Devadatta’s son. Thus Padmini charted out a course of life which would make him a complete man, with learning of a Brahmin and strength of hunter.

### **Conclusion**

Padmini performs Sati. India is known for its Pativratas- wives who have dedicated their whole existence to the service of their husbands- but it would not be an exaggeration to say that no Pativrata went in the way Padmini did. She performs Sati not to any person but to the idea of perfection and thus power, which is to grow with the powers of mind and body combining in one person. Her son is to be an ideal combination, the best of mind, and the best of physique. She dies in the hope that the man of her dreams will appear not in a distant future. We have not been able to get such a man till date. But genes’ transplantation or human cloning which are in the air hold out the promise to bring a generation of complete man, but the idea of completeness may, God forbid, lead man to new horizons and leave man unsatisfied.

But the playwright fulfils the dream in comic ambience. Hayavadana becomes a complete horse. Padmini’s son laughs at the idea of completeness.

Bhagavata clinches the issue, saying that happiness lies in being as Nature makes us- “unfathomable indeed is the mercy of the Elephant-headed Ganesha. He fulfills the desires of all – a grandson to a grandfather, a smile to a child, a neigh to a horse. How indeed can one describe his glory in our poor, disabled words?” (Act.IV) The play ends with a happy note praying to God to give us prosperity and good sense.

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