

Identity Crisis in Girish Karnard's *Hayavadana*

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ABSTRACT: : *Indian English well known writer Girish Karnard's one of the best plays Hayavadana. Hayavadana means horse head man. This paper aims to highlight the identity crisis of the main plots, Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini and sub plot, Hayavadana . Girish Karnard's Hayavadana is taken from Vetala Panchavimsati, a component of Soma Deva's 'the Katha Sarit Sagara' Thomas Mann too handled the tale for his short novel. It also highlights the power of the mind over the physical strength. Karnard also projects humanism with the psycho-social modes of life. Its dynamics like human identity, abandoned children and the repressive conventional codes are also analysed.*

Key Words: *Hayavadana, Power of mind, Physical strength, humanism and psycho-social modes*

Girish Karnard's *Hayavadana* is taken from *Vetala Panchavimsati*, a component of Soma Deva's 'the Katha Sarit Sagara' Thomas Mann too handled the tale for his short novel. The former champions the cause of idealism and the latter provides solution to materialism. Both venture to use modernity. But Karnard uses conventions, lesser things motifs, myths, folk art, masks and curtains to highlight the power of the mind over the physical strength, whereas Mann uses the tale for the ironic confrontation of the duality in life. Karnard also projects humanism with the psycho-social modes of life. Its dynamics like human identity, abandoned children and the repressive conventional codes are also analysed. Mann aims to unite the spirit and the flesh in human life. On the whole it is a make-believe story. For instance the sacrifice of the arms, head and beheading of one's ownself.

In the beginning Lord Ganesha represents the three different stages, the divine, the prosperous human and the animal. He is also the embodiment of perfection, imperfection, completeness and incompleteness. The Bhagavata's prayer is very suggestive. The plight of *Hayavadana* with the horse's head, annoys at first, next evokes sympathy after listening to his pathetic story. He is directed to go to the mount Chitrakot to worship Goddess Kali to fulfil his desire for completeness and transformation. He has all the qualities of the human race except the horse's face. Because of horse's head and the human body, *Hayavadana* could neither be with humans nor with the animal. In the end he gets the shape of complete horse with the blessings of the goddess. His human voice gets off when he plays with the child of Padmini. His neigh becomes human laughter. *Hayavadana's* change is full as an animal.

This essay attempts to highlight the identity crisis of *Hayavadana* and also examines the main characters Devadatta and Kapila. Both are very close friends. Devadatta is known for his frail frame of body but an intellectual. Kapila is sturdy and stout.

Devadatta falls in love with the local merchant's daughter. If he wins her hand, he is ready to sacrifice his arms to the God. Kapila happens to be the go-between. The former marries her happily and the later continues his ardent friendship. As they go on a journey to Chitrakot, Devadatta severs his head as a sacrifice to goddess Kali. Kapila, who goes in search of him also follows him by getting rid of his head. Utterly confused in the dark, Padmini, goes in search of them, cries over the event. Goddess Kali gives commands to fix the heads on the dead bodies and place the sword on the necks to recover their lives. Both come back to life but their heads are transposed which cause the confusion complicating their identities. One lives with her and the other goes to the forest. It leads a dual. Again in Act II they kill themselves in the scuffle. Padmini could not retrieve their lives but ascends the funeral pyre and performs 'Sati' leaving her son born to Devadatta to be taken to the hunters first and the next to her father.

Thus the play causes several disorders. The persons change due to the transfer of the heads. They suffer from the unified functioning of the incorporate body. Both became disintegrated bodies. Padmini is after the head of Devadatta and the body of Kapila. Again disruption causes Kapila with the body of

Devadatta to go to the forest to regain the original shape and size. Devadatta's son does not know to laugh or speak or to wonder at the objects. The audience get the complicated human identity of a state of the disorder.

From the mouth of Bhagavata, Devadatta is

“comely in appearance, fair in colour and unrivalled in intelligence, Devadatta is the only son of the Revered Brahmin, Vidyasagara. Having felled the mightiest pundits of the kingdom in debates on logic and love, having blinded the greatest poets of the world with his poetry and wit, Devadatta is as it were the apple of every eye in Dharmapura”. (P, 106)

His close and intimate friend is called Kapila, the son of ironsmith, Lohita. His complexion is dark, but he is daring in physical strength. Their friendship is as strong as that of the brotherhood of Lava and Kusha, Rama and Lakshmana and Krishna and Balarama. They have one mind and one heart in their life.

The sub-plot dealing with Hayavadana, the man with the horse's head, wants to regain his human head. The play exhibits that his mother is the princess of Karnataka. On the day of marriage many princes came to sue her hand. She fainted after looking at the Araby prince's horse. On the revelation, she married the white horse and lived with him for fifteen years. One fine morning, she saw a charming celestial Gandharva who revealed that he suffered a curse by the god, Kuvera. Now he returned to his original self and asked his wife to accompany. She bluntly refused the offer. So the husband cursed her to be a horse and left. That horse was Hayavadana's mother. The father left for his heavenly dwelling and the mother happily bran away. Hayavadana wanted to change his horse's head and retain the man's voice and body. But towards the end he becomes a fully-developed horse. The supremacy of the head over body is found in the case of Hayavadana. His mother's fifteen years of association with the horse makes her become a horse along with the curse of her husband. She is very much happy.

When he was deeply in love, Devadatta swears that he would sacrifice his arms to goddess Kali and his head to Lord Rudra. In fact, Padmini's house was swept by the goddess of wealth. So also goddess of learning was in Devadatta's house as a maid. Logically they got married and the friendship of Devadatta and Kapila prospered.

On their way, near the river Bhargavi, Kapila relates to the hermit, Vysa and also reminds him about the temple of Rudra. This is the severe turning point in the play. On learning the two he goes to the temple and swears to the goddess to forgive him for he had forgotten the vow. Then he takes the sword and cuts off his head. Coming to the same place, Kapila too cuts his head after finding his friend dead. Thus he joins Devadatta. Padmini is also shocked and worried about the two dead people. She cries aloud. Her wails are heard by Mother Kali. She gives her instruction to bring them back to life and goes to sleep. The heads are attached to the respective bodies and brought back to the life by placing the sword. The head of one fellow is on another's body thereby causing confusion.

Thereafter the real identity crisis begins. Confusion as to who should possess Padmini begins each of them claim the right to own Padmini. The arguments go about in the shastras like the head is important and seed of the body in her womb is also important. Padmini opines that she should accompany the man with the head of Devadatta and the strong body of Kapila. Accordingly a great rishi gives the solution. “As the heavenly Kalpa Vrishka 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 with Kapila's body returns to Dharmapura. He lives with Padmini. He also faces a wrestler. But he continues reading, writing, and studying. Kapila who went to the forest did exercises and built up his original strength of body. Devadatta became slender losing his muscular body because of studies. After years, Padmini happens to meet Kapila in the forest and tells him the mole identity on the shoulder of her son and Kapila. She also exclaims; “...Kapila! Devadatta! Kapila with Devadatta's body! Devadatta with Kapila's body! Four men in the lifetime” (P169) Kapila advises her to go back to Devadatta. He also continues to talk about the identity crisis. Padmini rests her head on his chest.

Five days pass. Devadatta finds them in the forest. The identity crisis reaches its peak. On agreeing to the love of Padmini, they start living like the Pandavas and Draupadi. But it is not continued for long. It ends up in a duel killing each other. Now it is Padmini's turn to face the critical juncture. She tells Bhagavata to hand over the child to the hunters in the forest. She resolves to find the solution that the son must be growing in the forest as Kapila's son for the next five years. Then he must be taken to Dharmapura and given to Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara as Devadatta's son.

In the meantime she prepares 'Sati' and that is the next sad part of the play, putting an end to self in the fire is the solution. Hayavadana again meets Bhagavata. He narrates his story that from half animal half human, he became a full-fledged animal, a horse. Later he meets the boy and requests the boy to laugh and the boy loses his neigh. The boy laughs like a human. Hayavadana gets the neigh and leaps to run in great

joy in the form of the horse. At last Padmini's son returns home in success, riding a white horse. Ironically the play also ends with a prayer of success to the rulers in their tasks with a little bit of sense.

To conclude, Hayavadana becomes a horse like his mother. He is fully transformed. Padmini's son gets the voice of human. Both Devadatta and Kapila interchange their intelligence and physical strength. Though they develop the original sense and features of their beginning in course of time, they are not content in sharing the relationship of Padmini. In the first part, they sacrifice the self, one for the goddess and the other for friendship. In the second stage it ends in a duel, killing one another. This results in the wise judgement that birth is a natural factor and the other unnatural duel ends up in conflict and confusion. Death by sacrifice does not result in good and meaningful solution. But death by natural killing results in the best possible solution. Though Padmini suffers from the split-mind personality, she sacrifices herself in the pyre 'sati'. The son is restored to the humans; Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini are taken to the other world. Hayavadana runs joyfully to join the animals of its kind. Thus the play provides deep solutions to the identity crisis in the present times.

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