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**HAYAVADANA - A TALE OF MYTH AND IDENTITY CRISIS WITH ESEMPLASTIC
IMAGINATION**

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ABSTRACT

Girish Karnad has presented the play *Hayavadana* with the myth of Ganesha and a character's yearning for completeness is projected with eternal thirst. Within the plot of *Hayavadana*, there is a sub-plot and this sub-plot is Karnad's own inventive creation with Esemplastic Imagination. It is based on complex human predicaments and this complexity finds no actual solution. If we go through the paper we see that it is tale of myth and identity crisis with esemplastic imagination.

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Hayavadana is a play which is projected with the myth of Lord Ganesha who is a summation of both 'embodiment of imperfection' and 'of incompleteness' and is worshipped as the destroyer of incompleteness.

According to Kirtinath Kurtkoti,

"The source of the plot of *Hayavadana* comes from *Kathasaritsagara*, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit."

Vetala Panchavimsati and Somdeva's *Brihat Kathasaritsagara* - these two works compose the same tale of the transposition of heads. Only certain characters and places have been given fresh names.

In these two works, there are two stories. In the work of *Vetala Panchavimsati*, the story is as followed-In the city of Shobhavati, there is a temple where through the favour of Goddess Gauri, Prince Dhavala marries Madanasundari, the daughter of the king Suddapata.

One day Suddhapata's son Svetapata proceeds to his own country with his sister and her husband. On the path they come across another temple of Goddess Gauri. Dhavala enters the temple to pay homage to the Goddess. There he sees a sword which is obsessed to offer his head to the goddess and does this.

When he does not return for a long time, Svetapata enters the temple and gets stunned to see that Dhavala is dead and his head is presented to Goddess Gauri. Then with some irresistible urge he also cuts off his head and presents it to the Goddess.

After waiting for a long time for her husband and her brother, Madanasundari comes to know the whole matter. She prays and requests the Goddess to restore her husband and her brother. Listening her prayer, Goddess Gauri tells her to set their heads on their shoulders.

But Madanasundari commits a great mistake. She wrongly puts the head of her husband on the body of her brother and that of her brother on the body of her husband. Both of them were given life. Madanasundari then realizes her mistake, but what has been done cannot be undone. At this stage Vetala asks Vikram, 'Who is

Madanasundari's husband, the man with her husband's head, or the man with her husband's body?' The King's answer is that the person who has Dhavala's head on his shoulders is the husband.

In 'Vetala story', the problem seems to have been solved thus though it is not proper solution. The same story has been told by Thomas Mann in his *The Transposed Heads* and the same story is again revived to create Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*. This story is dealt about Shridaman and Nanda who are very intimate friends. The former belongs to Brahmin by birth and the latter is a cow-herd as well as blacksmith.

Shridaman falls in love with a woman named Sita whom he happens to see when he and Nanda - both are travelling together. He asks Nanda to act as a messenger between him and Sita. First, he laughs to listen the idea, but at the request of his friend, Nanda agrees to do so. Sita is agree to his proposal and marries Shridaman.

After sometime, when the couple – Sita and Sharidaman, accompanied by Nanda, are travelling through the forests so as to reach the house of Sita's parents, they lose their way. Then he finds a temple of Goddess Kali and they take shelter there for the night. Shridaman goes into the temple, sees the Goddess Kali and under some unknown influences he cuts off his head and offers it to Kali.

After waiting for a long time for Sharidaman, Sharidaman does not return and when Nanda in search of his friend goes into the same temple, he finds him dead. Out of fear of being accused with the murder of his friend for the sake of Sita whom he also loves, Nanda kills himself too.

Seeing the horrific situation of both Sharidaman and Nanda's death, Sita goes to kill herself but Goddess Kali appears before her and interrupts her in doing so and asks her to beg what she wants. Sita begs Sharidaman and Nanda's life. But out of her excitement, Sita commits a horrendous mistake. She puts the head of Shridaman on the body of Nanda and the head of Nanda on Shridaman's body. Both of them are restored to life but a great problem arises in Sita's life to decide who her husband is: the man with Shridaman's head or the man with Sharidaman's body? At the advice of sage Kandaman she favours the person with Sharidaman's head. So the man with Nanda's head and Sharidaman's body becomes a hermit. Sharidaman and Sita live together and they give birth to a boy baby named Andhak.

But when Sita with her son goes to see the person with Nanda's head And Sharidaman's body, she spends the day and the night in his company. The next morning Sharidaman reaches the place where Sita and Nanda are enjoying heavenly bliss. He becomes angry and challenges Nanda.

They begin to fight and kill each other. Sita performs the role of 'Sati' by sacrificing her life on the funeral pyre of her husband and her friend. Andhak remains alive with the social identity as Sati's son.

In the play *Hayavadana*, Girish Karnad projects the story of the transposition of heads with so many characters with different names and identities. Karnad has created a sub – plot of *Hayavadana* which is purely his own inventivecreation with esemplastic imagination which adds to the total impression and significance of the play.

Esemplastic Imagination or Secondary Imagination is a kind of creative power which is strong and energetic upon the vitality of primary one. The term 'esemplastic' is a word borrowed from the Greek 'to shape.'

Coleridge in the 10th chapter of *Biographia Literaria* describes the ability of Imagination as 'Esemplastic'. Esemplastic Imagination is the synthetical power and it dissolves, destroys, breaks and melts things in order to recreate new forms. Karnad, in his plays, has used Indian Mythology with supplementation of his imagination.

The Central theme of the play *Hayavadana* is based on incompleteness which is foreshadowed in Bhagavata's worship. This play depicts the protagonist Padmini's yearning for completeness and perfection. It is the tale of three persons - Devadatta - Padmini - Kapila. Devadatta is the son of a learned Brahmin Vidyasagar. Devadatta represents the acme of intellect. On the other hand Kapila is the only son of an iron-smith Lohita, he is dark-looking but he is very strength in physical skills and so he is an important functionary in king's army.

Padmini is the heroine of the play who becomes happy after her marriage with Devadatta but is attracted by Kapila's strong physique. Though her inner urge must remain repressed and so her fidelity as a

chaste Hindu wife must never be in question. Devadatta and Kapila- two are close friends. Devadatta is a man of too much intellect and Kapila is a man of strength. But Kapila falls in love with Padmini with whom Devadatta is married.

Padmini yearns for a man of perfection with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body. According to Mann, human body is a device which always yearns for perfection. So when Padmini sees that both are dead and Goddess Kali is agree to provide life to both, Padmini gets the opportunity to transpose their heads to each opposite though he does this in a state of paroxysm. She commits such a wrong in the darkness of temple. As a result Padmini gets the desired man with Kapila's body and Devadatta's head. Devadatta and Kapila-two persons are two prototypes of two castes in our society.

In our society, Brahmin is learned and wise but physically weak like Devadatta but Kapila is a Kshatriya as well as wrestler who is physically strong but not so wise. In the sub-plot of *Hayavadana*, the horse-man is a reflection of incompleteness who is the off-spring of a celestial being and a princess with horse-head and human body and he longs for becoming a complete man. He suffers from identity crisis. He is a human being with broken tusk and cracked belly and he is the embodiment of imperfection and of incompleteness.

In *Hayavadana*, Karnad projects the play with the theme of incompleteness through Padmini's strong quest for unattainable perfection.

According to Chakravartee:

"... in *Hayavadana*, the theme of the play is an old one --- man's yearning for completeness, for perfection. It is this yearning which makes people restless in their ordinary existence and makes them reach out for extraordinary things..." (p - 37)

Padmini is a representative of the erotic principle or the life force, her nature may not easily accept the curbs put on the instinctual urges.

Karnad in this play shows the complex human predicaments that can have no easy solutions. Human beings cannot bear too much reality. If we always hunt for completeness, it will end with tragically or comically. So horseman's search for completeness ends comically. The animal body always gives supremacy on the 'Uttamaga', i.e., the human heads and it is the reason for which Karnad gives the title *Hayavadana*, human's search for completeness. This play shows a kind of essential ambiguity of human personality which is shaped by the human environment.

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