



THE UNREALISTIC AND SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS IN GIRISH KARNAD'S *HAYAVADANA*

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is a detailed study of the unrealistic and supernatural elements in the play, Hayavadana by Girish Karnad. It also studies relationship in between love and reality in the life of Devdatta and Kapila. It also studies dissension between the couple. Girish Karnad has special interest as regards Man-Woman relationship in his plays. Karnad's protagonists are persons for whom 'aloneness' sole is the only natural condition. There is also the influence of mythology in his plays. The readers find supernatural element in his works. It is the treasure worthy of securing. These protagonists are mainly men and women and sometimes supernatural beings too.. The present paper is a lucid attempt tois perceive the interrelationship between unrealistic and supernatural elements in the play, Hayavadana.

Key Words: Unrealistic, Supernatural, couple, Goddess Kali, Dolls, fragrant heads, horse, human and supernatural relationship etc.

INTRODUCTION

Girish Karnad is one of the prominent Indian dramatists writing in English in the Post-Independence period. Basically, an Indian Actor and Film Director, Karnad was born at Matheran near Mumbai in 1938. He is a native of Karnataka and wrote in Kannada and he himself translated most of them in English. He began to write plays when he got inspiration from the myth from Mahabharata. His childhood was spent in Sirsi. There used to be drama troupes in the region. Karnad observed two kinds of theatres – one was the kind of touring troupe of actors which was also called as 'the Parsi theatre' and the other Yakshagana. The second was played with masks and the theme was to be legendary. It was becoming out of date by the 1950's. Yakshagana was considered as a low kind of art. Yet, Karnad took

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interest in it. Karnad got scholarship at the age of 22 and he went to England for his higher study. He is one of the most famous of living playwrights in India today. He acted both in plays and movies. He also makes frequent appearances on the small screen. He wrote *Yayati* [1961], *Tughlaq* [1964], *Hayavadana* [1975], *Nagamandal* [1988], *Taledanda* [1990], *Fire and the Rain* [1988] etc.

Karnad had been a Rhode's scholar at Oxford from 1960-1963 and a Bhaba fellow from 1970 to 1972. He was also visiting professor and resident scholar at the Chicago University for some time. Karnad uses the conventions and motifs of folk tales and folk theatre, masks, curtains, dolls, story within a story to create a bizarre world. It is a world of incomplete individuals, indifferent gods-world different to the desires, frustrations, joys and sorrows. He was the director of the Film and Television Institute of India, Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Academy – the National Academy of the Performing Arts and Director of the Nehru Centre, London – the Cultural wings of the High Commission of India. He received the Sahitya Academy Award in 1994 as well as the Jnanapitha Award in 1998 - India's highest distinctions for life-time contribution to literature and the arts. He has been felicitated with the Padma Shri [1972] and the Padma Bhusan Award [1992].

In the play, *Hayavadana*, Bhagavata introduces to Devadatta's love for his friend Kapila in Dharampura. The account is legendary and the actions are only probable. The two youths are two bodies. They have one heart and one mind. Devadatta is a Brahmin, studying Shastras and living up to his tradition. This god-given one is the son of one who possesses the ocean of wisdom. Above all the name of the place is significant. It is a force for all to act and behave according to the norms of Dharma – act, truth and justice. Kapila is the son of a smith, a wrestler and the friendship of theirs is to be taken for granted defying the caste or Varna system. Devadatta falls in love at first sight. This is unrealistic when one considers his fifteen adventures already he has gone through. It is again a daughter of a merchant and not a Brahmin girl. He wants to marry her and he uses Kapila as his messenger to contact her. Kapila succeeds in getting them married. Devadatta has vowed saying that if he gets Padmini he would offer his head to Lord Rudra and his hands to Goddess Kali. This is a strange vow, unrealistic. One dies when he fails to get the desired thing. But, the unbelievable thing is heard from a learned Brahmin. If he offers his head, where is the sense of getting the woman he has loved? It seems like a perverted thing. Yet, Devadatta belongs to the time when 'Dharma' was observed meticulously and honestly. However, Devadatta spends a few happy married days and soon he comes to know that Padmini is in love with Kapila. He tries to dissuade her saying that Kapila is not used to women. Padmini answers in a paradoxical way,

*"You mean, it is dangerous to be with him." [43]
However, he could not avoid Kapila's visiting Padmini.*

When the fair of Ujjain comes near, Devadatta plans to go to Ujjain with Padmini. Even now, he tries to evade Kapila. But, he could not and Kapila is to drive the cart. They stopped for a while in the forest. Devadatta observes that Padmini takes more interest in Kapila and he knows that a woman cannot resist herself when once she happens to see him. So, when Padmini wants to go about in the forest, he says he would stay near the cart and she should go with Kapila. Here, he says this intentionally. He does not want to come in the way of her

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love. They go to the temple of Rudra and Devadatta goes to the temple of Kali which is a little away from it. There he decides to sacrifice his life for the sake of Padmini, so that she could be free from the bondage of marriage and unite with Kapila. He takes the sword lying there and cuts his head off and dies. Devadatta thinks he has obeyed his vow. Perhaps, this fate was pre-determined and hence, he was obliged to vow in that way. But, he is not destined to die. Kapila's sacrifice makes Padmini pray Goddess Kali and with her grace both come to life. Here, due to the mistake by her Devadatta's head is joined to Kapila's body. So, from now onward, there is a mixture of personalities in both friends.

The body of Devadatta goes to Kapila. With Kapila's body, Devadatta is learned as well as powerful too. It was the body that Padmini had loved and now she can enjoy it in the name of Devadatta. When it was to be decided as to who was who, Devadatta had quoted from the scriptures saying that the head controls the whole person and directs and hence the 'head' is significant. The body is meant for menial, hard to his favour. This fact is also unreal at the time when truth and honesty ruled the mind Kapila would not have thought so. Nevertheless, Devadatta enjoys life with full love from Padmini and he is inspired to wrestle, swim and do such feats. But, soon, he loses his strength and in less than a year, his body grows thin and delicate as it was before – a Brahmin's body that is destined to maintain tradition by learning and reading. Padmini gives birth to a son. But, she loses interest in Devadatta. It is natural for him because when once desired thing is got, its value goes on diminishing. Perhaps, Devadatta knows that she is not faithful to him. When the old dolls were torn, Padmini asked him to bring new dolls from Ujjain fair. He does not want to leave her alone. He wants to send a servant to Ujjain for that. But, Padmini insists on his going and Devadatta goes. He returns soon and finds Padmini is not home. He guesses where she might have gone and follows her to the forest.

Devadatta comes with a sword in hand in search of Padmini, which means he wants to take revenge. But, when he meets Kapila, he becomes soft and conciliating. Now, it is clear that Padmini has come to Kapila. Kapila has his body and hence if they unite, it is his body that Padmini unites with. So if he kills Kapila, he kills his body. Here is a more complex riddle than the previous one. So, Devadatta meets Kapila on friendly term and invites him for the fighting because the three cannot live together. In the fighting, Devadatta who has grown weak ought to have been defeated and killed. Here is another unrealistic situation. It is said that they fought like lions and killed each other like cobras. It may be better to say that Kapila would not wish to live for fear of joining Padmini which would have been an anomaly in the Dharma-ridden society. But, Padmini who is the cause of their deaths is not sorry. Devadatta leaves an adulterated son to continue his Brahmana-Clan. Thus, like other two, Devadatta is a complex character.

The play, *Hayavadana* is based on the legend from *Kathasaritsagar*. The actions and its characters belong to a very old time when people believed in the supernatural. Hayavadana is the head of the horse. It has human body. Hayavadana has his own story independent of the legendary story of two friends of Dharampura. The unnatural and strange about Hayavadana's birth is that his mother, the princess of Karanataka married a white magnificent horse. After fifteen years, she found that it was not a horse. Actually, it was a cursed Gandharva by Kubera and he was emancipated from his curse after fifteen years. But,

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the princess was not ready to accept the Gandharva as her husband. Hence, he cursed her to become a horse. Hayavadana is the offspring of this couple.

At the first stage, there are a human being [woman] and horse and the next stage, the Gandharva and horse [woman]. Therefore, Hayavadana is half horse and half human being. This blending is associated with the blending of Devadatta and Kapila. A Gandharva is a supernatural being. Kubera and his curse and the alleviation later on are also supernatural. The combination of an animal and man is unnatural and hence, there is something strange about him. So, Hayavadana is no less supernatural. Yet, he comes in contact with the Actors and the Bhagavata. The princess is a human being and the Gandharva is a supernatural being and both are brought together. Hayavadana wants to get rid of this strange thing about him. First, he wants to become a human being. Then, he wants to become a complete horse. It shows the debased state of human beings. The reader also find supernatural element in the process under which Hayavadana becomes a horse first with the grace of the Goddess on Mount Chitrakuta and then miraculously by the contact of the dumb boy.

If the goddess on Mount Chitrakuta employs her supernatural power in transforming Hayavadana into a horse, the goddess Kali uses her supernatural power in bringing Devadatta and Kapila back to life after they had cut their heads off. The goddess on Mount Chitrakuta considers the 'head' to be important in the body. Hayavadana only begged to make him complete and forgot to say 'complete man' so he was made a horse. Now, he finds human voice a retarding factor in a horse's life. Goddess Kali, possessed with the supernatural [godly] power, converses with Padmini on equal terms.

There is a dialogue between goddess Kali and Padmini. Before she prays, Goddess Kali comes to her help, as if a friend or a well-wisher comes to help. This was the kind of relation between gods, supernatural power and human beings. Padmini want to kill herself after the death of Kapila and Devadatta. But, the goddess prevents her from it. Padmini does not know it is the goddess who is addressing her. The terrifying figure of the goddess with arms stretched out, her mouth wide open with the tongue lolling out, is seen. The goddess certifies her to be honest, who loved one and married another and lived with both after wards. Now, it is the death of Kapila that she would not bear and wants to die. The dolls which are another sort of supernatural beings call her a bitch and a whore. This is the kind of relation that was between the supernatural and the human beings. People had not denied the supernatural power, but they had kept liaison with it. It was not an alien thing something from the other world. Goddess Kali has the power to bring the dead to life. The Kubera and Gandharva have the power to curse and alleviate it. It seems Padmini has lost her credit with her excessive lust. And when the friends kill each other and die a second time near the temples of Kali and Rudra, she does not think of approaching any and praying for the life of her husband.

The Bhagavata also believes in the superstition though he stands between the old world and new world. He speaks for many characters in the play. He meets Kapila and Devadatta and sings referring to the old world. He believes in that Hayavadana must have been cursed for his misbehavior. Yet, he does not believe, in that a human body could have a horse's head. He asks Hayavadana to Banaras and at last he asks to go to Mount Chitrakuta to get rid of his head. He believes in the power of the goddess. It is the same case with the Actors.



The introduction of dolls clearly makes a sub plot. It shows the function of the chorus in Greek tragedies. Like the gods and goddesses, they show supernatural power by acting as characters in the play. The Bhagavata is the head of the Chorus. There is a female chorus and the Actors are a part of chorus and partly they perform the role of characters. The female chorus is meant to speak about the inner woman who can understand it better than a man-interpreter. So, the Bhagavata and the female-chorus both combinedly make one chorus. Many scenes have been allotted to the Dolls and they have an important function in the movement of the drama. Even in the end, the Dolls possess some unusual power affecting human mind. In a way, they exercise a control over the boy's mind. Their power ends as soon as the boy laughs. There is neither climax nor denouement in the play. The significant change takes place in the last scene. The boy begins to speak and sing. The horse loses the unwanted human voice. Both are miracles and hence supernatural. Goddess Kali is presented as a semi-goddess. The structure of the last scene is somewhat crowded with several kinds of subject matter.

Thus, Girish Karnad has beautifully dealt with the unrealistic and supernatural elements in the play, *Hayavadana*. The play has made a remarkable imprint on the minds of the reader and its spectators. It also gave name and fame to the dramatist for dealing with such unrealistic and supernatural themes in his dramas. The use of mythology and supernatural things in the works of Girish Karnad gave him much fame and name after the publication of the play, *Hayavadana*.

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