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Shailesh Ranjan  
Asst. Professor  
Dept. of English

## Quest for Completeness in Hayavadana

Girish Karnad is one of the greatest dramatists of India. With Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar he shares an exalted place in Indian writing in English drama. By now he has written nine plays in Kannada and translated them in English. 'Hayavadana' is one of the most popular plays of Karnad which was published in 1970. The theme is borrowed from Kathasaritsagara via Mann's retold story, "The Transposed Heads".

"Quest for Completeness" is the major theme around which all the characters of the play moves around. Nature or reality is characterized by the inseparable togetherness of mind or body. But it is only in theory or speculation that we tend to think of mind and body as two separate or independent entities. In the empirical world mind and body are inseparable, although they may not be equal to each other in proportion or measure. In some people the mental (intellectual or imaginative) qualities may dominate over physical (manual and adventurous) qualities. Hence they are taxonomically divided in to mental type and physical type. This body - mind schism presented in Hayavadana from the point of view of a woman. Whether a woman wants or likes the body or the mind in a man (or husband) - that is the central question in the play. It is this ideological / theoretical question that has to be answered through the mythical apparatus.

The scene is set in a mythical place called Dharampuri, which means a City of Virtue and therefore has an allegorical significance. But it cannot be pinpointed geographically. Similarly Dharmasheela, the King of the City is named allegorically and it means a Righteous Man. The dichotomy between mind and body is presented through two characters, Devadatta and Kapila, who are a pair of binary opposites. Whereas Devadatta is a man of intellect, Kapila is 'a man of body', with all the respective and attendant features. For example Devadatta is comely in appearance, fair in colour, and unrivalled in intelligence. He is the only son of the revered Brahmin Vidyasagara (again an allegorical name meaning 'Ocean of Learning') and an expert on logic, love and in poetry. His talents seem to be gifted by God to him. Hence the allegorical name Devadatta. Kapila provides a good contrast to the brainy Devadatta. The word Kapila has about four contrastive meanings, but the nearest meaning in the present context is 'monkey' or 'apish'. He is the only son of the iron-smith Lohita, who is to the King's armoury as an axle is to the chariot wheel. He is dark and plain to look at, yet in deeds, which require drive and daring, in dancing, in strength and in physical skills, he has no equal. Thus there is a clear contrast between brain and brawn. Although they are a pair of contrastive characters, they are close and complementary to each other.

As the play proceeds, we learn that Devadatta has sighted a girl and fallen in love with her and pines for her. He wants to marry her and takes a dangerous vow of sacrificing his limbs to goddess Kali and Lord Rudra. Kapila being a close friend of Devadatta wants to help the latter by locating the girl's house and winning her over to his friend. After marriage Devadatta and Kapila live like friends and brothers for some time. Devadatta is a married man now whereas Kapila continues to be a

bachelor. But as days go by, Devadatta develops subtle kind of jealousy for Kapila as he notices Kapila's attraction for Padmini, "Does she really not see? or is she deliberately playing the game with him? Kapila was never the sort to blush. But now, he only has to see her and he begins to wag his tail. Sits up on his hind legs as though he were afraid to let her words fall to the ground. Being pregnant, Padmini insists, <sup>Devadatta</sup> on going to Ujjain fair. On the way, Padmini notices Kapila's physical prowess and beauty and appreciates it openly, "How beautifully you drive the cart, Kapila. Your hands don't even move, but the oxen seem to know exactly where to go". As they proceed further, Padmini wants to know why a particular flower is called the Fortunate Lady's flower. Kapila climbs the tree to bring the flower to her. Again Padmini appreciates his physical beauty and agility, "How he climbs - like an ape. Devadatta begins to notice Padmini's deeper feelings now. Although she is a married woman she can not help appreciating the handsomeness of a man other than her husband.

As all the three sight a temple of Rudra on the way, they break their journey for a while. Kapila and Padmini walk to the temple of Rudra, whereas Devadatta stays back with some pretext and wishes them, "Good bye Kapila. Good bye, Padmini. Pray the Lord Rudra bless you! You are two pieces of my heart - live happily together. I shall find happiness in that." After the departure of Kapila and Padmini, Devadatta walks to the temple of Kali remembers his promise to the goddess and severs his head, "Take it, Mother, accept this little offering of my head." (P-28). When Kapila returned, he is shocked to find him dead. Being unable to bear the sorrow, he, too, cuts off his head. When Padmini too tries desperately to sever her head, the goddess Kali appeared before her. As Padmini requests her to save her by reviving the two dead bodies, the goddess orders her, "Now do as I tell you. Put

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these heads back properly. Attach them to their bodies and press that sword on their necks. They'll come up alive. Is that enough? As directed by the goddess, Padmini puts the heads back to the bodies, but in her excitement she mixes them up so that Devadatta's head goes to Kapila's body and vice versa.

After the exchange of heads a new confusion of identities is created. A theoretical question about whether a man is his body or his mind is posed here. Old friendship between Devadatta and Kapila is replaced by a kind of blood relationship now. The question whether Padmini has married Devadatta's head or his body crops up. Thus a dichotomy between mind and body is created. Kapila claims Padmini as his wife because she has married his body. Similarly Devadatta claims her too, as she has married his head, as head is the topmost in position as well as in importance. At last they reached a rishi for a solution who replied - "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. Kapila desperately goes to the forest."

Now that Devadatta's head is combined with Kapila's body, some changes are seen in his behaviour. The physical features of Kapila asserts in Devadatta. He feels inspired to fight and defeat wrestlers and never feels tired. His hands have become rough like a labourer's. For a while his body overshadows his mind. Similar situation is with Kapila. With a brahmin's body attached to his head, Kapila feels weak - "when this body came to me, it was like a corpse hanging by my head". He could not lift an axe without elbow moaning. Although Padmini is apparently happy with her husband, she loves Kapila unconsciously. In her dream she sees a man, but not her husband. He has a labourer's face

but a nice body. Similarly she is obsessed with Kapila during her waking hours also. Even when Devadatta asks her to keep some sweets and lime juice ready for a Sanskrit Pandit, Padmini is obsessed with Kapila and his mother's death.

But this change does not continue for long perhaps due to the effect of time as well as to the principle of irreversibility of things in God's design. For example, Devadatta wants to return to his brahminical duties after a brief spell of bodily prowess and accomplishments. His palms have become soft again as they were earlier. He can not enjoy going to the gymnasium any more. Thus Devadatta returned to his usual self. Padmini consoles him - "what does it matter that you are going soft again, that you are losing your muscles?" He replied that he will not enter Kapila in his life again.

When Devadatta returns from Ujjain fair, he goes to Kapila in the forest. After exchanging their disconcerting memory of partially changed identities, Devadatta asks Kapila, "Do you love Padmini and he replied in affirmative. They came to conclusion that they both must die because they can not live together. Accordingly they kill each other.

After their death Padmini asks the Bhagavata to hand over her son to hunters in the forest until he is five years old and then to revered Brahmin VidyaSagara of Dharampura. Then she commits Sati.

The central message of the play seems to be that man searches for completeness but unfortunately it is not possible. The arbitrary completeness that Devadatta and Kapila achieve does not remain for long as everything is subject to the effect of time. So the quest for completeness remains only a wishful desire rather than a permanent possibility.