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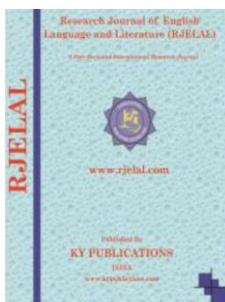
THEME OF INCOMPLETENESS IN GIRISH KARNAD'S "HAYAVADANA"

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ABSTRACT

Girish Karnad is one of the distinguished playwrights of the contemporary Indian stage. He has penned twelve plays. Each play is unique in its own way for its experimentation and techniques. The Play 'Hayavadana' is the third creative expression in the chronology of Girish Karnad, and it is one of his important plays which depicts the incompleteness of the human beings.

The playwright has taken the idea for a tale found in a collection of stories in Sanskrit, Somdeva's Katha Saritsagar from 11th century. Karnad also draws story from Thomas Mann's 'The Transposed Heads'. He borrows from both the sources but recreates the story with his extraordinary imagination. This play revolves around the episode of horse-headed Hayavadana who desires to attain completeness as a man and Padimini who is in dilemma between Devadatta and Kapila to attain completeness. This theme, finally bringing out the passion and humor of everyday life. The human being's incompleteness between body and soul is presented well with an imagination mythological story in this play.

Introduction

The shared history of British presence has also produced a substantial body of writing in many languages, known as common wealth literature. It signifies a fusion of cultures of the East, and the West for most of these countries have their own languages and where English is not their mother-tongue.

Girish Karnad is regarded as one of the great writers of contemporary Indian drama. His works are 'lasting things' in Commonwealth Literature. He is also active in the world of Indian cinema working as an actor director and screenwriter, both in Hindi and Kannada cinema, earning numerous awards. In his plays, he makes use of ancient myths and legends to create contemporary consciousness and existentialist crisis of modern man, through his characters locked in

psychological and philosophical conflicts His plays speak about the fundamental ambiguity of human existence. "Yayati", "Nagamandala" and "Hayavadana" are some of his best plays.

Karnad has been composing plays often using history and mythology to tackle contemporary issues. He has translated his major plays into English, and has received critical acclaim across India. He had got many awards like Jnanpith Award, Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan by the Government of India and so on. His plays reflect the metaphor of life is a journey in search of completeness and finally bringing out the passion and humor of everyday life.

"Hayavadana", a remarkable work of the early nineteen-seventies, remains the quintessential play about the human being's search for completeness. This story has two streams of stories. The plot of Devadatta and Kapila grapples with the

question, "Is a person's identity is his mind or his physical embodiment?". The main plot of his work, Hayavadana is based on 'the story of transposed heads' in the Sanskrit Vetala Panchavimsati. A modern source of the play is Thomas Mann's The Transposed Heads which the author called 'Metaphysical Jest'.

The plot of 'Hayavadana', the Horse-Headed Man, is Karnad's own invention. It serves both as prologue and epilogue to the play. The plot of horse headed namely Hayavadana, explores the physical wholeness of an actual man, with a horse head punning at the ideology that completeness can be found. Through this plot the centrality of the philosophical problem based by the search of completeness is reinforced by Karnad.

His quest for completeness is ultimately resolved at the play's conclusion when he returns again through divine intervention complete, a complete horse. This cleverly mirrors and parodies the exchanged heads story of Devadatta and Kapila subsequently exert their influence over the human bodies that each finds itself atop.

Discussions

The play opens with Bhagavata, a stage player in the play enters the stage and raises some rhetorical questions on the perfection and imperfection in perspective of Gods and humans. Then Puja would be done for play Lord Ganesh. The Lord Ganesh with human body and elephant head appropriately suggests the central theme of incompleteness. The Bhagavata sings the hymn to Him comments:

'An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly- whichever way you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness. How indeed can one fathom the mystery that this very Vakratunda –Mahakavya, with his crooked face and distorted body, is Lord and Master of Success and Perfection'.

The plot of Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini, explores the search for identity in the midst of tangled relationships. The story starts when the

Bhagavata takes the reader to the city of Dharmapura, and describes them as,

"Two Friends there were,
One mind, One heart".

Devadatta and Kapila are closest of friends. Devadatta is endowed with all the accomplishment expected of a Brahmin youth and the only son of the Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara. He is pleasant to look at in appearance, fair in colour and unrivalled in intelligence. Devadatta falls in love with an extremely agile and quick-witted girl, Padmini, the daughter of a rich merchant. Kapila, is the son of an Ironsmith Lohita, who is the King's armory the chariot-wheel. He is dark and plain to look at, yet in deeds which require drive and daring, in dancing, in strength and physical skills, he has no equal.

Devadatta is 'the mind' and Kapila 'the body'. Devadatta falls in love fifteen times in a period of two years. Yet he fails to get married to any one of the girls. Even his sixteenth love seems to be a fiasco. He feels utterly hopeless and helpless: 'I swear, Kapila, with you as my witness I swear, if I ever get her as my wife, I'll sacrifice my two arms to the goddess Kali, I'll sacrifice my head to Lord Rudra'14). Unlike Devadatta, Kapila does not fall in love. He does not feel it difficult to arrange the marriage of Devadatta and Padmini. Devadatta's body does not respond as adequately as his mind readily loves and Kapila's mind is not nimble enough to feel the sensations of his body. Thus both suffer from self-alienation.

Kapila does not fall in love with Padmini. He arranges the marriage of Padmini with his friend Devadatta. At the same time Padmini is attracted to the virility of Kapila. Both Kapila and Padmini start drifting towards each other. Devadatta becomes jealous of this and shows in his thought

'Does she really not see? Or
She deliberately playing this game
With him?'

Kapila is more attractive than Devadatta because as the representative of animal energy in human body. Padmini is a victim in the hands of the pulls of physical pleasure. She was very attracted by

the ethereal shape of Kapila. She describes the Kapila's body as:

"What an ethereal shape!

Such a broad back-ocean like

Muscles rippling across it" (25).

Devadatta in a sudden outburst of emotions decides to sacrifice his life to Kali. That he is doing so because he was unable to bear the pangs of jealousy. He says:

"Good-bye Kapila

Good-bye Padmini

May the Lord Rudhra bless you" (28).

The incompleteness of human desire is symbolized by Padmini. As the ideal of all womanly attributes she is the lotus itself. Rooted to the earth and with the flower turned skyward, she symbolizes the fundamental nature of the human body: it is torn between the downward earth and the upward heavens, itself being impressionable. After Devadatta and Kapila's sacrifice,

Padmini stumbles on the opportunity of having the better of the two - Devadatta's head and Kapila's body. Her predicament is the predicament of a modern emancipated woman.

Human desire for completeness represented by Padmini ends in a fiasco as the transposition of heads gradually proves that it is the mind that rules. After the transposition of heads by Padmini at the Kali temple, complications arise. Initially, Devadatta-actually head of Devadatta on Kapila's body-behaves differently from what he was before. Devadatta's head on Kapila's body and vice-versa solves her problem only temporarily. Devadatta's head- Kapila's body combine slowly reverts to the nature of Devadatta. And so the other combines of Kapila's head and Devadatta's body.

But there is a difference. Devadatta stops writing poetry while Kapila is haunted by the memories in Devadatta's body. Padmini, after the exchange of heads, feels that she has the capacity for complete experience. Her situation is beautifully summed up by the images of the river and the

scarecrows in the choric songs. But she failed in what she expected. And she returns to Kapila, after sending Devadatta to the doll fair to get new dolls. The play ends with Devadatta and Kapila fighting a duel in which the heads of both roll again. When the friends are dead, Padmini decides to perform sati.

The deaths serve the absurdity of the situation. The world is of incomplete individuals, indifferent dolls that speak, and the world is indifferent to the desires and frustrations, joys and sorrows of human beings are clearly shown in the play of Girish karnad's "Hayavadana". The play depicts the realm of incomplete individuals, magnanimous gods, of vocal dolls and mute children, a world apathetic to the longings and frustrations, ecstasies and miseries of human beings. In this play Karnad brings back poetry, music, a sense of gaiety and celebration traditionally associated with a theatrical event. U.R.Anantha Murthy, critic, in his "A Note on Karnad's *Hayavadana*" has this to say about theme: "The play exposes the audience to a significant theme like 'incompleteness' in a comic mode".

According to Krishna Gandhi, 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. . . . But the ideal of perfection itself is ambiguous. The character of Hayavadana is invented as an example of this ambiguity". This theme is suggested in the play itself in phrases such as:

"Search for completeness

This mad dance of incompleteness".

Therefore it is correct to view that Karnad's "Hayavadana" deals with the theme of search of incompleteness of human existence.

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