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Vision of Gender in Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*: Functions of Multiplexed Corporal Masks

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Abstract *Through the integration of the local Yakshagana and the western Brechtian Epic theatre practices, Girish Karnad through Hayavadana (1971) has formed a brilliant theatre show. One theatrical device, apart from the folk-theatre motifs, is the utilization of physical masks on stage. The reading examines different techniques used by Karnad, which provide the staging of masks successful in theatre. It furthermore focuses on the objectives, techniques, and types of mask treatment in expressions of disguise and revelation at the physical level. The purpose of this exploration is to make a complete study of the expressive masks used in Hayavadana (1971) to interpret the proposed reality of the characters. The qualitative approach has been adopted as a methodology where the interpretive method of investigation has been engaged to search for the secreted meanings in the text. Professed through the lens of select theoretical structure, Hayavadana becomes a site of diversity and range.*

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Introduction

Girish Karnad, separately from being a celebrated artist and director of theatre and films, is a path-breaking writer of post-independence India who was born in 1938 in Matheran, Karnataka. Karnad researches Indian myths and legends, exploiting them as mediums of a novel idea. Amidst these myths, he attempts to portray the illogicality of life with all its rudimentary desires, struggles and man's everlasting effort to attain excellence. His depiction of characters is radical, and his women characters can be reflected as the rational and liberated women of contemporary times.

The Indian social customs are male-dominated, barely providing any possibility for females to use their autonomy for the execution of wishes and development of individuality which they assert as of their own. Karnad tries decolonization of the culture and society in twofold approaches. Initially, he demonstrates the flaw and insincerity of approach, communal, social, and ethical standards and practices, and then by fashioning his females dramatically respond to these morals. For this reason, he derives the storyline from mythologies, folklores, and folk-tales and integrates to the modern circumstances, brings out the changes between mythological, the imaginary domain of make-belief and the truthful modern world. It is this expedition from the mythological world to the world of realism, communal and mental, that proposes a strong possibility for debate of contemporary women from diverse points of view. Karnad's women play lead roles in the argument of numerous modern problems: precisely women's independence, household, matrimony, chastity, loyalty, culture, ethos, beliefs, faith, and rites, reflecting modern time, a post-colonial experience.

A fictional art gets vast importance as it echoes human knowledge and responsiveness

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authentically, and besides matching with the common socio-moral enigmas. It is the oldest, valid, and mainly interesting type of literature. It has familiar empathy and connection with a creed for since long. The *Mahabharata* delineates performance as a blend of poetry, story, and action. Their artistic susceptibility has constantly been reactive to the tribulations of women and their place amongst people and civilization.

In the early stage, as *Rigveda* discusses, "women were fully the equal of men as regards access to and capacity for the highest knowledge, even the knowledge of the Absolute or Brahma" (Chaudhary, 2020). In numerous holy writings and Dharmashastras female's position is defined not just as equal to a goddess, nevertheless as an indispensable component of a male's progress and life, which is besides sanctified as 'Adi Shakti'. In the Indian patriarchal society, a woman's extra-marital liaison judges her and then she is hated.

Research Objective

The article intends to observe significant dualistic characteristics of the drama through the exploitation of physical masks. It endeavours to explicate Karnad's practice of empowering women through raising their opinion against societal power.

Research Questions

The article has tried to explore the following questions:

1. How Karnad generates the awareness of gender bias through physical masks as theatrical devices?
2. How Karnad's drama is unbiased and continually establishes women's matters on the front line in order to deliver social parity?
3. How the masks in *Hayavadana* (1971) help in exposing the double standards of Indian patriarchal society where the women are expected to stay within the four walls while men are unconditionally allowed to wander around and satisfy their sexual desires?

Theory and Methodology

Karnad takes excessive attention in investigating profound into Indian tradition. Although he is a big lover of mythos, he acquires a predominant curiosity in Feminism. Several of his works perceptively echo Feminism. This manuscript examines the female perception in Indian patriarchal society through the defense mechanism. Whilst assessing the theatrical practices, themes and female characters of *Hayavadana* (1971), I have used feminist critical viewpoints, moreover keeping in view feminist drama conventions. Therefore, the theatrical text involved in this investigation clarifies the power associations and female subjectivity in Indian society and discloses the manner in which women use intelligent and explicit approaches to confrontation and try to undermine the power structure.

Literature Review

The politics of secularism, societal justice and parity that Karnad expressed without dread are revealed in the dramas he wrote over 60 years. We recuperate Karnad's politics of gender, so evidently voiced in the female characters with whom he populates his theatre. Unlike numerous male writers of his cohort, Karnad was certain to provide his female characters not just an opinion but furthermore a plot—they were vital to the progress of the storyline as well as to what Karnad was endeavoring to express about the world in which we live. Nevertheless, transitory as their manifestations may be, Karnad's women are characteristically free in opinion and act, even when they are positioned inside the repressive limits of patriarchal configurations. From the queens of the medieval era in his historical dramas to modern women like Padmini in *Hayavadana* (1971), these characters perform with an awareness of their individual ability and the clear resolve of achieving their aims and wants.

In the dramas which drew from minor stories in the epics, Karnad provides us with the even more fundamental prospect of women using their bodies in order to retaliate

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to their earlier disgrace. In *Hayavadana* (1971), founded on an Indian folk tale, Karnad goes further and centres on female sexual longing, making it the essential dynamic of the drama itself. In the drama, the love-sex trio between two men and one woman lurches and influences what the woman desires. Clever Padmini is driven to secure the sexual pleasure she has realized with the man who is not her husband. To hold this desire, she executes whatsoever it takes and employs everything that the gods offer her. Karnad packs Padmini's sexuality without throwing opinion on her character; in fact, he guarantees that we understand what she desires and the ways she employs to obtain it.

In each of Karnad's dramas, a woman unabashedly pursues together love and desire, negotiating these by walking external to the limits that were set for her. With the youthful and impulsive Padmini in *Hayavadana* (1971), we have a literal effort to fuse the two male kinds, the intellectual thinker and the viscerally attractive wrestler. It is no chance that Karnad brings the tense subjects of caste, class, and gender jointly so frequently in his dramas. R. K Dhawan opines, "it is a well-known fact that the real success of a play can be tested on stage. A playwright needs a living theatre to put his work on the acid test, evaluate its total effect on the audience and thereby get a chance to improve upon his performance." (qtd. in Bhatta, 1987)

Analysis and Discussion

Karnad draws on certain established conventions of mask usage, but he gives it an altogether different identity, and it becomes more of an emotionally charged X-ray machine as well as a theatrical apparatus. One character in the play *Hayavadana* (1971), does not wear the same mask during the presentation. Therefore, his masks are not fixed with the characters throughout the play; rather, they convey diversified emotions as per the need of the play.

Karnad has used physical masks for both the male characters, Devadatta and Kapila, in *Hayavadana* (1971). These masks, therefore, present the physical dissimilarity between these two friends right from the inception of the play. When *Hayavadana* (1971) opens, Devadatta and Kapila are presented as the closest friends by Bhagavata. Devadatta is comely in looks and "unrivalled" (Karnad, 1994) in acumen and is the only offspring of a Brahmin, Vidyasagara. With his education, intelligence and lyrical skill, he has influence over the individuals of Dharmapura. The second youth, Kapila, is the only son of the ironsmith Lohita. He is extremely dark and "plain" (Karnad, 1994) in appearance, nevertheless in bodily power and dancing "he has no equal" (Karnad, 1994). When Bhagavata starts singing, "Two friends they were—one mind, one heart" (Karnad, 1994), the actor arrives, running shuddering with dread. He falls at the feet of Bhagavata and informs that he has seen a horse talking. Mistaking Hayavadana's head for a mask, Bhagavata, with the help of the actor, tries to take it off. But what they discover is that it is a "real head" (Karnad, 1994). Exasperated at his dual identity, Hayavadana requests Bhagavata to help him in becoming a complete man again. He answers that he is ready to accept any fate but not his head. The scene then shifts to the main plot where the friendship between Devadatta and Kapila is affected when both the friends fall for the same girl, Padmini. Later in an accident, Padmini swaps the heads of these two friends. In the final act Karnad presents how the characters search and struggle for completeness.

In *Hayavadana* (1971), the two friends—Devadatta and Kapila present two aspects of a single personality who are entirely different from one another as per their physical appearance but their interests remain the same. Bhagavata sings: "Two friends they were one mind one heart. They saw a girl and forgot themselves. But they could not understand the song she sang" (Karnad, 1994).

Devadatta and Kapila are the closest of friends— 'one mind, one heart' (Karnad, 1994), as the Bhagavata calls them. Devadatta is a man of brain, Kapila a man who has no match in muscle and incorporeal abilities. To present these two characters on stage, Karnad has employed the masks for the head only and the

body is exposed to the audience. Devadatta enters wearing a mask of pale colour and Kapila is wearing a dark one. The use of the lighter and the darker masks by Karnad signify the diversified humanity. Both these friends, therefore, become representatives of human beings around us. These characters are, therefore, hidden behind a screen, and their personality is revealed to the audience by a cross-section examination.

The relations between the two friends become problematic when Devadatta weds Padmini. Kapila falls in love with Padmini, and she also starts drifting towards him. The friends kill themselves and, in a scene, entertainingly amusing nevertheless at the same time complete with profound theatrical implications, Padmini rearranges their heads, giving Devadatta Kapila's body and Kapila Devadatta's. The discrimination between the two parts of a single body is made possible through the use of dark and light masks worn by them.

The convention of employing a variety of masks in the form of language, song, make-up and physical masks worn by the performers in *Hayavadana* (1971) is similar to *Yakshagana* theatre (Gilbert, 2009). 'Yakshagana' is a classical folk-art custom of opera in western theatrical conventions (qtd. in History of Theatre, 2009). Actors wear costumes and enact various roles. It is a conventional dramaturgical practice merging dance, music, spoken word, costume make-up, and stage technique with a different style and practice. It is a theatre practice largely dominant in the coastal areas and neighboring zones in Karnataka. Karnad employs this technique in his play *Hayavadana* (1971) in the presentation of Ganesha on stage. The play opens when the mask of Lord Ganesha—elephant god, is brought on stage.

The presence of the mask of Ganesha, the one-tusked Elephant and protecting god of actors, aid not merely to create connections with conventional Hindu theatre but similarly to expect the usage of masks in the play and to highlight the main thematic concern, the exploration for the fullness. The moral enigma at the centre of the drama, regarding whether the head or the body creates the real nature of an entity, in fact, identity, is formalized in the theatrical device of masking. Between the divine and the human realms (the human sphere presented by Devadatta and Kapila) stands Hayavadana, the human being with the horse's head seeking human wholeness. The masks, thus, represent the visual connection between the two realities – the reality desired (by one) and the reality perceived (by others).

The mask used for Ganesha makes the audience think that if it is a fact that the head represents the body, then a god with an animal's head cannot be better than a human being because it is the elephant head that rests on the body of this so-called Lord of completeness. The mask is also used for Hayavadana. Bhagavata, blaming him for wearing a mask of a horse and frightening people with his awkward appearance, urges him to take it off. When he does not oblige, Bhagavata attempts to pull off Hayavadana's head with both his hands. Finally, the reality dawns on Bhagavata, "This isn't a mask! It's his real head!" (Karnad, 1994). This *Yakshagana* technique is further used to project the essential opposition between Devadatta and Kapila. Devadatta wears a pale-coloured mask, but that of Kapila is dark in colour. The transposition of heads is possible because of the use of masks only.

The idea of masks hiding the real face leads to the complexity of human relationships. All the three main characters, i.e., Devadatta, Kapila, and Hayavadana, wear a mask—they try hard to conceal their true selves, but in reality, it is through these masks that their hidden emotions are revealed to the audience. The opening of *Hayavadana* (1971) obeys more or less the same ceremonies of *Yakshagana* theatre since:

At the beginning of the performance, a mask of Ganesha is brought on stage and kept on the chair. Puja is done. The BHAGAVATA sings verses in praise of Ganesha, accompanied by his musicians. (Karnad, 1994)

The opening of the play *Hayavadana* (1971) is noteworthy from the thematic as well as the structural point of view. The setting of the stage is highly emblematic of the

incompleteness of life. The stage is "empty" (Karnad, 1994) – suggesting the existentialist sense of 'emptiness' (Gill, 2005) in human life - except a chair on which the mask of Ganesha is placed and a table. The mask lying on the chair further upholds the duality in the life of modern man along with the hypocrisy and double standards of the contemporary Indian rulers who have lost their faces behind the masks. The chair, standing for influence and authority, is occupied ironically by a mask and not by a human being. Thus both satire and symbolism are observed as the play opens when we see that even the god Ganesha is wearing a mask of an elephant's head.

Ganesha's head signifies the *Atman* or the soul, which is the eventual truth of human life, and his human body indicates *Maya* or the conceivable reality of human beings. In Hinduism, the elephant head signifies knowledge and its trunk epitomizes *Om*, the sound representation of celestial veracity. Similarly, the snake that runs around his waist denotes dynamism in each form. Besides, he is adequately modest to ride the lowest of creatures, a mouse (qtd. in "Ganesha", 2009).

It is again through the masks that Karnad is able to criticize the insignificance of the gods. The goddess—Kali wears a mask to show her terrible appearance, but when the two friends cut their heads apart and Padmini calls her for help, she is presented as if in sleep. Ganesha and Kali are two important examples that are represented as if they are mere static objects and which do not perform any role when they are required. The broken tusk and the awkward belly of the god symbolize the idea of inherent incompleteness and absurdity in human life (qtd. in "Ganesha", 2009). The action in *Hayavadana* (1971) starts with the bringing of a mask of Ganesha on the stage and placing it on the chair. In this way, Karnad not only introduces an important religious character on stage but also hints at the incompleteness of a man by emphasizing this specific mask of the god. Ganesha, who is considered all-powerful by the Hindus, is presented in the form of an incomplete deity. Accompanied by his musicians, Bhagavata sings:

O Elephant headed Herambha
whose flag is a victory
and who shines like a thousand suns,
O husband of Ridhi and Sidhi
Seated on a mouse and decorated with a snake,
O single tusked destroyer of incompleteness,
we pay homage to you and start our play.
(Karnad, 1994)

It is interesting to note that Bhagavata, from the beginning of *Hayavadana* (1971), raises the idea of incompleteness and imperfection, the major psychological issue in the play. His description of the absurd and a-symmetrical appearance of the invoked deity raises the issue of tension between completeness and incompleteness. An elephant's head on a disfigured human body suggests absurdity. The playwright seems to question the religious and traditional values when he says: "How indeed can one fathom the mystery that this very Vakratunda-Mahakaya with his crooked face and distorted body is the Lord and Master of Success and Perfection?" (Gill, 2005ill, 2005). By presenting this distorted figure of the god, Karnad highlights the major theme—the search for completeness. It is further emphasized in the play that if the god Ganesha is an incomplete deity and presents imperfection, then it is understood that all the major characters in the play are in search of completeness. The incomplete god makes one think that if the god himself is deprived of completeness, then the people living in this world cannot be complete beings and, therefore, they remain unsatisfied with their present state. Padmini in the main plot and Hayavadana's mother in the sub-plot desire for a perfect partner. Therefore, this presentation of the god Ganesha connects the main plot with the sub-plot.

The very theme of the incompleteness of a human being is presented through the incomplete structure of god (Ganesha), and this is made possible through the use of masks on stage. The play unveils with an "empty" (Karnad, 1994) chair on the stage, signifying the feeling of emptiness in life and haunting the meaninglessness of action. There is

"nothing" (Gill, 2005) on the stage but only a chair and a table. The absurdity of life becomes more pronounced with the absurd figure of Ganesha. The gap between imperfection (appearance of Ganesha on stage) and perfection (claim of Ganesha as a complete deity) enhances the atmosphere of absurdity and duality in reality, which, more than being real, is what is perceived. Thus "The destroyer of incompleteness" (Karnad, 1994) is not complete in himself.

It has been observed that characters wear masks with a costume that covers the body also. But Karnad's masks cover only the head of the character and can be replaced as per the requirement of the play. The mask generates the themes of the idea of marriage by choice, the role of the mystical, idea of blessing and curse, the departure of husband and wife, and the abandonment of a child. It is, therefore, through the use of a mask that these themes link the story of the main plot with the sub-plot.

In the sub-plot, Hayavadana tells us that his mother married by choice as he tells Bhagavata that:

HAYAVADANA. My mother was the Princess of Karnataka…My mother took one look at that handsome prince sitting on his great white stallion - and she fainted.
HAYAVADANA. She said she would only marry that horse! (Karnad, 1994)

Karnad has drawn a variety of emotional responses from the use of a single mask. Conventionally, a single mask in a play exudes a single response from an audience. For example, a humorous mask generates amusement, and a scary mask produces fear amongst the audience, but in *Hayavadana* (1971), a single mask has multiple connotations for the audience as well as for the characters on stage. For example, the appearance of Hayavadana—a being with the horse's head and a human body in Act 1 of the play interrupt Bhagavata while he is giving the background of the main plot. For the actor on stage, Hayavadana appears as an anomalous being. But Bhagavata believes him to be wearing a mask and, with the help of the actor, tries to pull off the head of Hayavadana, and Hayavadana cries, arousing laughter amongst the spectators. This figure also becomes humorous for the child of Padmini on stage, but it is revealed by Hayavadana that this head is his actual self. It is the non-verbal action on stage that conveys the truth about the real self of this man-horse creature when:

(The Actor comes and holds Hayavadana by his waist while the Bhagavata pulls at the head. Hayavadana offers no resistance but can't help moaning when the pain becomes unbearable. … Slowly, the truth dawns on the Bhagavata.) (Karnad, 1994)

Observing this action on stage, Bhagavata admits the reality by saying:
BHAGAVATA. Nata, this isn't a mask! It's his real head! (Karnad, 1994)

It appears that the entire humanity is being criticized with the presentation of Hayavadana. This character with the head of an animal and the body of a human being symbolizes present man; he is superior to an animal, nevertheless less than a human being. G.H. Nayak, in his book titled *Indian Literature since Independence,* states the symbolic importance of this semi-human being in these words:

In *Hayavadana,* an attempt is made, among other things, to symbolize ever so slightly the predicament of contemporary India as well as its future. The strange horse Hayavadana appears at the very beginning of the play almost as an average Indian citizen. Once this association draws upon us, many other particulars in the play, including the Kapila-Devadatta episode, take on specific connotations relevant to the wider Indian context. (Nayak, 1987)

It presents how an average Indian citizen struggles for his identity and is revealed through the character of Hayavadana. This creature, from the beginning of the play, is dissatisfied with his appearance and searches for complete identity. Hayavadana, in the play, stands for such an individual in our society who is more sensitive and loyal to the nation than the apparently perfect men of the society. But satirically, all these people who are below in dignity in comparison to this strange being laugh at this half-human half-horse character.

As Bhagavata begins to give the background of the main plot, the sub-plot also commences with the appearance of Hayavadana—a being with the horse's head and a human body. The actor interrupts Bhagavata, informing him of this abnormal being. When Bhagavata and the actor try to pull off the head of Hayavadana, thinking it to be the mask and Hayavadana cries, it arouses laughter. The story of the union of Hayavadana's parents, his birth, and his present crisis foreshadows the upcoming events of the main plot, i.e. selection of husband of choice, the disharmonious relationship between husband and wife, the tragic end of marital relationship, and the sad plight of the deserted child.

In the sub-plot, the mask is again employed for the presentation of the character Hayavadana. Like Kapila and Devadatta, Karnad has made use of the physical mask for the head of Hayavadana (the mask of Horse's head) to bring the character of the horseman on stage. Apart from Kapila and Padmini, even Hayavadana is the embodiment of meaninglessness in human life. His absurd appearance suggests the absurdity of human life. The idea of irrationality initiated in the figure of Ganesha is carried on to the end of the play with the help of Hayavadana. From his parental background to his personal life, nothing happens in any logical order. His figure, his bodily movements, his encounter with life, everything is marked by absurdity. He suggests the monotony of life when it runs around the stage in a circle. The little child of Padmini is also not free from this existential feeling. Only the lifeless dolls interest him. He has no interest in the living beings as if he has learnt it from his elders. He refuses to communicate with anyone around him. The character of Kali in the drama authenticates the interpretation that nothing godlike can assist human beings. Pranav Joshipura, in his book *The Plays of Girish Karnad,* presents his views:

Probably what Karnad tries to reveal through Padmini is the predicament of a modern, free and bold woman who is torn between polarities, a woman who loves her husband as well as someone else for two different aspects of their personalities. (Joshipura, 1999)

Tension in *Hayavadana* (1971) is between the idea of completeness and incompleteness, and this conflict is presented on stage by the use of masks especially worn by the male gender in the play, including Ganesha and Hayavadana. From human to semi-human characters, nobody is a whole, and each is in pursuit of completion in one way or the other. Tension begins to appear from the very beginning with the invocation of Ganesha. He is to bless completion but is not complete in himself. It has a disfigured body, an elephant's head on a human body. Therefore, the atmosphere of tension is created in the first scene itself. The idea of tension is further heightened with the character of Hayavadana, who is neither a human being nor an animal. But instead of becoming a complete human being, he becomes a complete animal.

The role of the mystical and the idea of blessing and curse are portrayed through the characters of Lord Ganesha and Kali. Devadatta and Kapila cut their heads off at the temple of Kali, and it is revealed through the dialogue of Kali to Padmini that she had cursed them for telling lies:

PADMINI. Then why didn't you stop them?
KALI. Actually, if it hadn't been that I was so sleepy, I would have thrown them out by the scruff of their necks…
PADMINI. But why?
KALI. The rascals! They were lying to their last breaths. (Karnad, 1994)

The affiliation between Padmini and Kapila in *Hayavadana* (1971) also has sexual connotations. After Padmini has transposed the heads, she at once decides to select the figure that has Kapila's body as a husband. Even before the Rishi decides their dispute, she makes up her mind to go with Devadatta. She goes to the extent of cursing Kapila when he shows his claim over her, holding that it is the body that represents man. Padmini calls Kapila "rascal" (Karnad, 1994) and "brute" (Karnad, 1994) and asks him to "shut up" (Karnad, 1994). She screams with fury, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" (Karnad, 1994), and Kapila rightly exposes her true intentions, "I

know what you want, Padmini. Devadatta's clever head and Kapila's strong body" (Karnad, 1994).

Masked characters, commonly divinities, are a vital feature of Indian theatrical practices, countless grounded on representing the epics of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. *Hayavadana* (1971) also employs traditional theatre techniques. One example of the incorporation of the new theatrical techniques by Karnad with the ones used by the Greeks is the invocation to the god Ganesha by Bhagavata in the play *Hayavadana* (1971). It imparts traditional as well as a modern touch to the play—the invocation to some mystical power is a classical device, but as it becomes the instrument of breaking the traditional illusion of theatre, it becomes modern too. Bhagavata starts narrating the story as the legendary and mythical tales are often narrated with: "This is the city of Dharmapura ruled by king Dharmasheela. Two youths, who dwell in this city, are our heroes" (Karnad, 1994). The ritual of story-telling, especially in the form of folk songs by the elders to their younger generation, remains known in the Hindu culture. Therefore, the narration of the story of two friends by Bhagavata brings the folk elements into the plot.

The Female Chorus, along with the stage directions and the Dolls, also helps in drawing attention to the mask used for the revelation of the character of Padmini. Speaking in favour of Padmini, it sings:

Why should love stick to the sap of a single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many petalled lantanas, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower? (Karnad, 1994)

The chorus again comments: "A head for each breast. A pupil for each eye. A side for each arm. I have neither regret nor shame" (Karnad, 1994). The playwright sings the feminine feelings and desires through the female chorus. It says what Padmini cannot say about herself.

Karnad has used traditional techniques in combination with modern ones for the presentation of characters on stage. It is something like using classical instruments to create a heavy metal tune. For instance, one such element of Hindu traditional theatre—the Female Chorus—is introduced in the play *Hayavadana* (1971). This chorus performs the function of a mask for Padmini because it helps in the revelation of Padmini's feelings regarding Kapila that she cannot say or express openly. This mask of the Female Chorus hides what is obvious and uncovers what is hidden. The Female Chorus in Act 1 tries to veil the moves of Padmini towards Kapila in the following song:

FEMALE CHORUS. (*Sings.*) Why should love stick to the sap of a single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many-petalled, many-flowered lantana, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower? (Karnad, 1994)

When Kapila takes Padmini inside his hut in the forest, it is this Female Chorus that acts as a device to expose the longings of Padmini to the spectators by commenting:

FEMALE CHORUS. The river only feels the
pull of the waterfall.
She giggles and tickles the rushes
on the banks, then turns
a top of dry leaves
in the navel of the whirlpool, weaves
a water-snake in the net of silver strands in the green depths, frightens the frog on the rug of moss, sticks and bamboo leaves, sings, tosses, leaps and
sweeps on in a rush— (Karnad, 1994)

P. Dhanavel finds a deeper meaning in the story of the sub-plot and finds close affiliation of *Hayavadana* (1971) with Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* and the episode of *Shakuntala* in Vyasa's *Mahabharata* by commenting:

If the first extension to Kalidasa suggests that Padmini is Shakuntala, the second extension to Vyasa points to the fact that Karnad's invention of the character of Hayavadana is a dexterous transmutation of Shakuntala. The literary genetic framework of triadic relationship among Karnad, Kalidasa and Vyasa further indicates that the theme of *Hayavadana* is not so much of the 'mad dance of incompleteness' as that of the "plight of abandoned children in an indifferent world". (Dhanavel, 2000)

While Shakuntala is the daughter of a great Rishi and an extraterrestrial creature, Hayavadana is the son of a great princess and a celestial being. Both the parents of Shakuntala abandon her to be looked after first by birds and then by Kanva. Similarly, both the parents of Hayavadana forsake him. Hayavadana is a combination of a celestial human and an animal being. This partial appearance of Hayavadana is presented through the partial use of a mask that covers the head only while the body of the performer, playing the role of Hayavadana, remains the same as that of a human being. Karnad has utilized the dolls, Female Chorus, and half-curtains as innovative techniques of masks for the revelation of the hidden truths and emotions which are otherwise difficult to be known by the audience. It is this union of the conventional and current features that an inimitable theatrical presentation is made possible on stage.

So far, the discussion has revolved around the departure from the traditional uses, the assimilation with the West and their revelation power. The masks have assisted in the representation of the tussle between the realities of being (incomplete and imperfect) and wannabe (complete and perfect). While this generates a continuous dissatisfaction, the non-existence of one's ideal is a simultaneous source of reassurance and further dissatisfaction. Reassurance in the sense that one is not the only incomplete and imperfect one and further dissatisfaction that even one's complete and perfect ideals do not exist. This swaying between the existing incompleteness and the search for wholeness leads us to another dichotomy. Instead of accepting oneself as the incomplete being, the characters rather choose to live a double life—a euphemism for hypocrisy.

Conclusion

The article creates a significant academic input in examining Karnad's drama's demonstration of the images of women, concurrently observing analytically at the drama that deals with the problems concerned with women in India. The concerns dealt with in the drama in this scholarship are linked to women who belong to the subaltern classes or are sidelined owing to their gender or vocation. While I have moreover stated in my critique that the Indian women are not mutely coerced, they fight to satisfy their wants. I want to bring to my readers' notice that the woman deliberated in this reading should not be perceived without positioning her background, caste, and religious and social foci. In a similar mood, gender relations as well should not be considered with a simplistic lens where one group is leading and the other is subjugated and, thus, tyrannized. Socio-economic circumstances, society, caste, and faith, are the issues that rear and influence women and their subjectivities.

The query was to what degree power relations can overpower women's opinion? Has the drama depicted women as susceptible preys or unable to react or as resilient persons? I also tried to pose the problem of exploiting Spivak's words, can the subaltern speak? Padmini, even in her death, could not be obliterated totally; she is transmuted into an impervious 'subject' after her bodily death. Padmini in *Hayavadana* (1971) ventures to challenge the power of the entire patriarchal setup, which leads to disastrous results. Padmini is, therefore, a strong and influential individual who can question the status quo. It can safely be declared that the female character or the subaltern, in the drama by Karnad, can speak. Therefore, Karnad has tried to enunciate the position of the dominated classes and has endeavoured to intensify the opinions of the sidelined through his art. This commentary has tried to demonstrate that play and dramaturgy can best participate with arrangements of control and pave a way to making spaces for confrontation against the hegemonic social exercises. The dramatist does not propose answers; nonetheless, at least he prepares the spectators to contemplate analytically and enquire the hegemonic status quo.

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