

## In Pursuit of the Connotative Truth: The Mask and its Psychological Dimensions in Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*

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### Abstract

*In the course of this research paper an attempt has been made to explore the connotative reality of the masks. A critical look at the masks of different characters of Girish Karnad's play Hayavadana (1971) shows that they serve two significant purposes; of both hiding and supporting the truth, which in itself is a relative phenomenon. The study examines various techniques used by Karnad which render the presentation of masks effective in theatre. It also focuses on the objectives, techniques and types of mask usage in terms of disguise and revelation at the psychological levels. A special attention has been given to the analysis of the dialogue and the body language/gestures of the characters, which are used as a kind of a mask to hide their emotions from other characters present on the stage. It is, however, observed that their very act of concealment becomes a means to reveal the truth to the audience. These kinds of masks are considered as psychological masks which perform the same function as the physical masks do, without being physically observed on the stage. Finally, the goal of this research paper is to make a comprehensive study of the expressive language used in the play to expose the intended reality of the characters. Qualitative approach has been adopted as a methodology for this research paper where the interpretive method of inquiry has been employed to explore the hidden meanings within the text.*

**Keywords:** *body language, dialogue, disguise, expressive language, mask, psychology, revelation*

### 1. Introduction

I here explore the innovative uses of mask in Girish Karnad's play *Hayavadana* (1971). Traditionally masks have been used to 'conceal' reality as the Encyclopedia Britannica and Encyclopedia Wikipedia write about the function of masks, but Karnad in this play has used masks for the 'revelation' of hidden realities. In the course of this research paper the connotative reality of masks is explored: whether they hide or support the truth, which in itself is a relative phenomenon. It is noteworthy that in common practice, a single frozen

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expression on the mask is visible to the audience but Karnad uses the mask to expose multiple hidden emotions. Hence, he attempts to make visible both the psychological and the emotional aspects of characters to the audience.

The mask has a deeper significance in Karnad: it externalizes inner life and gives voice to their hidden desires. Eldredge suggests “when an actor no longer has the subtle expressions of the physical features at his disposal, he must discover a deeper system of expression like so many taps which are suddenly turned on” (1996, p.165). Karnad employs the same principle in the play *Hayavadana* (1971) where the characters in the play become more expressive when they hide behind masks.

In the play *Hayavadana* (1971), both physical as well as psychological masks are employed. It must be mentioned that ‘mask’ may be defined as “an article normally worn on the face typically in the theatrical performance for the purpose of protection, concealment, or amusement” (qtd. in “Mask” Wikipedia n. pag.). It has been used since antiquity for ceremonial purposes. Masks are usually worn on the face, although they may also be positioned for effect elsewhere on the wearer’s body, so in parts of Australia giant totem masks cover the body, whilst Inuit women use finger masks during storytelling and dancing (qtd. in “Mask” Wikipedia n. pag.). Karnad’s use of masks in the play *Hayavadana* (1971) can be contrasted with these uses because the characters in the play perform with some part of their body hidden behind the mask where the rest of it remains unmasked for male characters. Karnad has not employed any face covering for the female character in the play *Hayavadana* (1971), but instead has used dolls as masks for Padmini, the female protagonist in the play, to reveal her emotions to the audience. This treatment of dolls can be compared with contemporary western theatre, where the mask is often used alongside puppetry to create a theatre that is essentially visual rather than verbal, and many of its practitioners have been visual artists (qtd. in Wikipedia n. pag.).

## 2. Literature Review

Grounded on his explorations of folklore, mythology and history, the focus of Karnad’s plays reflects the problems and challenges of contemporary life, and endeavours to forge a relation between the past and the present. As an imaginative thinker Karnad visibly views the subjects of his plays from his private outlook, develops them in the cauldron of his personal ingenuity and own familiarity, and employs them as a channel to converse his personal independent and original feelings, thoughts and interpretations. Although identified for his debatable themes,

Karnad's plays are widely read and appreciated for his amazing dramatic techniques, intense imagery, and symbols and his exceptional skill to expose some of the severest and hostile realities of life with candid straightforwardness.

While Karnad's interests are multifarious, he has given the Kannada Stage a richness that could possibly be compared only with his talents as an actor-director. He has exhibited the Indian stage to what profundity the mythical themes and tradition could be engaged in order to reinvent a contemporary consciousness. The chief difficulty, nevertheless, was how to exploit these traditional forms in order to invigorate his works in the urban framework. It is at this point that the famous writer, Bertolt Brecht, came to his aid. Brechtian impact on Karnad made him suddenly alert of the theatrical imaginativeness and intrinsic influence of the Indian theatre. By a careful return to the rich tradition and the comparable art forms to popularize folk theatre, Karnad lights up the rich treasure house that the Indian dramatists can make use of. Karnad links the past and the present, and the prototype and the factual. In comparison to the 'minor and vestigial' (Balme, 1999, p.181) function in Western culture, masking is still an important element of ritual and ceremonial life in many post-colonial cultures e.g. in Africa. In such cultures masks are not just a theatrical device but represent a link to the corresponding world of spirits, gods, and ancestors.

Karnad has attained powerful effects in his play *Hayavadana* (1971) by altering and shifting the mask for the same character within a play. Karnad's employment of masks, which could almost be termed a 'play of masks' (Balme, 1999, p.196), is more flexible than found in most forms of traditional Indian theatre. It is through this flexibility of masks that the author utilizes them to expose multiple hidden emotions. These masks used by the characters throughout the play do not reveal only one hidden feeling; rather they convey diversified emotions as per the need of the play.

### 3. Discussion

I aim to evaluate the text in expressive and descriptive language as qualified by Eisner in his book *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice* where he states that such an approach enhances the significance of communicative language by emphasizing the role of "the presence of voice in the text" (1991, p.36). An attempt has been made to make the written work a rich and tightly woven account as stressed by Strauss and Corbin in their book titled *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. They comment that such writing is the one that "closely approximates the

reality it presents” (1990, p.57).

The analytic interpretive process has been used to study the psyche of all the major characters in the play *Hayavadana* (1971). Metaphors and symbols in the play are studied to express and reveal the mimetic, cathartic, and representation of unconscious desires of specially the female protagonist of the play *Hayavadana* (1971) i.e. Padmini.

An investigative stance has been adopted to analyze the behaviour and apparently hidden desires of the main characters. The goals set for this research are achieved through exploration and explanation of the text. Thus, the research design selected for the dissertation remains interpretive and hermeneutic. This includes the analysis and interpretation of the verbal and nonverbal forms of communication as well as prior aspects that influence communication, such as the meaning and philosophy of language, and semiotics.

I here explore the masks in Karnad’s play *Hayavadana* (1971), which reveal the hidden desires of characters on stage. The dialogue and the body language of the characters are used as a kind of a mask to hide their emotions from the other characters present on stage but simultaneously becoming a possibility to reveal the truth to the audience.

I have tried to bring out the inverted use of masks: revelatory rather than the veiled. It, therefore, becomes contrary to the function of the mask which is to hide the physical appearance of the performer as well as his desires. The element of disguise has been adapted according to the emotional needs of the characters, which otherwise it would be impossible for the characters to satisfy. The intriguing, yet truthful depiction of corporeal masks further enhances the hidden psychological factors that reveal the person behind the mask.

The paper elicits a shift in the use of mask brought about by Karnad in his play *Hayavadana* (1971) from its traditional applications. Instead of being the concealment ploys of the physical appearance, they have been employed as the revealing tools of the hidden emotions. Unlike the old impassive masks, those employed by Karnad have the expressive psychological potential. The simultaneous use of masks and dolls makes the typical eastern verbal theatre more of a western visual theatre. Throughout the play a tussle, between the sense of incompleteness and imperfection, and the exertion to achieve wholeness and precision, of two inevitable realities continues. Karnad may be credited for implanting the latter mark when, on the road from the beginning of the mask as a religious ceremonial tool,

he uses it in a subtle way to criticize Hindu mythology. A totally different use, psychological revelation and emotional depiction of the inner-self over-shadow all other past uses which transform the wearer to another entity and hide one's outer appearance.

Masks in *Hayavadana* (1971) do not behave as objects of exterior disguise and revelation of interior only. They alongside perform a vital role of self-discovery for the characters also. This does not bind the masks as a tool of interaction on the stage only rather makes them very interactive with the audience. Neither the effect of collective consciousness of a society on masks can be ignored nor their interpretation by the individuals of that society. Karnad, however, uses them not only objectively but adds a subjective dimension to their use.

Masks have the power to transform. They allow ordinary individuals to become something extraordinary. The mask in the play *Hayavadana* (1971) is used as an excellent theatrical tool to emphasize themes in a play. In "archetypal psychology", to understand ourselves it is necessary to peel away the layers that are invisibly present on the outside of our personalities (qtd. in Archetypal Psychology n. pag.). This process begins with examining the persona or mask, the façade, or how we would like to have the world look at us. We can make some fairly conscious decisions about our personas. In actuality, we need to have a persona, as we cannot afford to let the entire world share our every thought. In Karnad's play *Hayavadana* (1971), all the major characters in the play are mindful of their emotions, which they try not to disclose to the other characters on stage. Therefore, they either wear physical masks on stage or wear psychological masks to keep their secrets to themselves but these very masks become a source of revelation of their covert desires.

The use of power by one individual over the other corrupts basic human relationships. In *Hayavadana* (1971), we observe power-structured relationships whereby one group or person controls the other and since the core of politics is power, the play of power-politics would work towards exercising control over others. For this purpose, none of the characters make their hidden emotions and desires a public interest, and try to over-power the other by hiding themselves behind a mask. Padmini and Devadatta try not to unveil their interest and fear regarding the trip to Ujjain fair in Act 1. Devadatta is afraid of the time that Padmini and Kapila would spend enjoying with each other and on the other hand Padmini is looking forward for such a chance. Both of them, therefore, try to overpower one another through the use of language in which Padmini ultimately wins when the debate is taken forward as follows:

DEVADATTA. Padmini, Kapila isn't used to women. The only woman he has known in his life is his mother...

PADMINI. You mean it's dangerous to be with him? The way you tally one would never imagine he was your best friend. (Karnad, 1994, p.1.92)

The mask in the play is used in both its specific and literal sense (i.e., a face covering), and in its most general and figurative senses (any form of disguise, such as costume, makeup, or hairpieces). In our evolution, we have passed from spiritual masks, rooted in religion, to psychological masks (qtd. in "Common Ground" n. pag.). From the very beginning of the play, Devadatta was quite conscious of the fatal attraction between his wife and his friend, but he does not reveal his emotions to either of them, and remains behind a self-created psychological mask. In *Hayavadana* (1971), it is neither the war over property, nor a struggle for the expansion of kingdoms, but it is the obsession to win the heart of the charming lady—Padmini, "the Shyama Nayika—born of Kalidasa's description" (Gill, 2005, p.118). Both the friends love the same lady and, therefore, make plans under disguise to win over the other. Masks are metaphors because they symbolize something else. Masks enhance the metaphorical aspect of the dramatic experience. In many forms of theatre, masks immediately establish the symbolic nature of a character. Kapila has been chosen by Devadatta to take his proposal to Padmini's home. After having the first meeting with this lady, Kapila immediately falls in love with her but does not disclose it to his friend. Being alone, however, Kapila gives vent to his feelings through the following dialogue:

KAPILA. Devadatta, my friend, I confess to you I'm feeling uneasy. You are a gentle soul. You can't bear a bitter word or an evil thought. But this one is fast as lightning—and as sharp. She is not for the likes of you. What she needs is a man of steel. But what can one do? You'll never listen to me... (Karnad, 1994, p.1.90)

Padmini promises her husband that for his satisfaction, the trip to Ujjain fair should be cancelled and listening to this Devadatta gets thrilled. He does not reveal the real reason of canceling the trip i.e. his fear regarding the companionship of Kapila and Padmini but exposes his triumph over his wife as follows:

DEVADATTA. (*Trying to control his excitement*). Now—if you aren't going to be disappointed—then—truly—that's what I would like most. Not because I'm jealous of Kapila—No, I'm not, I know that. He has a heart of gold. But this is your first baby... (Karnad, 1994, p.1.93)

Power-politics in terms of mental warfare is also observed in the play *Hayavadana* (1971). It is presented by the utilization of psychological masks for the characters in the language they use and the actions they perform. But the dialogues uttered by the characters become a source of revelation of their feelings to the audience. If Devadatta seems to have won in the beginning, his victory is merely illusory. Kapila never stops trying and immediately sets his eyes on Padmini, and loses any control on his emotions which becomes explicit through the following dialogue:

KAPILA. Devadatta, my friend, I confess to you I'm feeling uneasy. You are a gentle soul. You can't bear a bitter word or an evil thought. But this one is fast as lightening—and as sharp. She is not for the likes of you. What she needs is a man of steel. But what can one do? You'll never listen to me. And I can't withdraw now. (Karnad, 1994, p.1.90)

It is the mask which is intended to protect the man against any danger by concealing his vulnerable human identity. One of the important themes in the play is the search for an individual identity. All the important characters in this play make use of the asides to make their concealed emotions public. The philosophical debate between the friends also helps the audience in understanding their otherwise hidden feelings. Keeping in mind Padmini's desire for strength, it is none other than Kapila who proves to be the right person for her. He might name her as his sister-in-law but his looks and his body language stand witness to the fact that his heart is in disagreement with his tongue. For Kapila, it is Padmini who supplies him life and energy, and appears to be sharp. He is so besotted with her that his emotions are even observed by Devadatta who states in an aside:

Does she (Padmini) really not see? Or is she deliberately playing this 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. And that pleading in his eyes—can't she really see that? (*Aloud*) Padmini, Kapila isn't used to women. The only woman he has known in his life is his mother... (Karnad, 1994, p.1.92)

This aside uttered by Devadatta performs the role of an emotional mask for Devadatta, because he is nurturing jealousy for his best friend—Kapila, who does not have the slightest idea of it. According to the Bhagavata in Karnad's play, the two friends with "one mind" (Karnad, 1994, p.1.82) and "one heart" (Karnad, 1994, p.1.82) fall for the same woman—"They saw a girl and forgot themselves" (Karnad, 1994, p.1.82). Kapila on learning from

Devadatta that the trip to Ujjain fair has been cancelled feels dejected “as though the whole world has been wiped out for a whole week” (Karnad, 1994, p.1.94). Kapila hides his personal emotions from his friend but makes them public for the audience by behaving in a particular manner. The conflict between going and not going on a trip to Ujjain fair is resolved quickly with the abrupt decision of Padmini in favour of the trip. The twist in the play appears with the defeat of Devadatta at this moment and is aptly portrayed by Bhagavata as follows:

Why do you tremble heart? Why do you cringe like a touch-me-not bush through which a snake has passed? The sun rests his head on the Fortunate Lady’s flower. And the head is bidding good-bye to the heart. (Karnad, 1994, p.1.95)

The time comes when neither friend can hide their personal feelings from the other nor can they disclose them. Therefore, both of them rip their heads apart without letting the other person know of the true motive behind such act. Kapila is observed completely under the spell of Padmini throughout the trip. Kapila even climbs the tree to obtain the fortune lady’s flower for Padmini which shows that he is over-eager to satisfy her and shows his emotions to her by bringing a mound of flowers. Devadatta has noticed the “pleading in his eyes, stretching out its arms and asking for a favour” (Karnad, 1994, p.1.96).

At the time when the two friends and Padmini are deciding to go on a trip to Ujjain fair together, and during this trip, Karnad has made use of semiotics so that the body language highlights the desire and urge of the character which is otherwise made secret. It becomes shocking for the audience that Devadatta does not even feel threatened and ashamed to tell lies before the goddess Kali. Devadatta claims that her beheading himself before the goddess is due to his promise made to her. But this is proved a lie because the audience knows the real reason behind this act i.e., to run away from the feeling that his wife is interested in his friend Kapila. He, therefore, wants the goddess to believe whatever he says rather than reveal his true emotions. On the other hand, Devadatta shows himself to be a religious person by trying to convince Kapila through the quotes of the holy texts. Kapila, however, snaps back: “Don’t tell me about your sacred texts. You can always twist them to suit your needs” (Karnad, 1994, p.1.107). Arguments between the husband and the wife indicate that the two friends are prepared to “kick up a row in the streets” (Karnad, 1994, p.1.107) and the final ultimatum: “You will have to kill me before you really escape me” (Karnad, 1994, p.1.108) shows that at this occasion both the friends have unmasked themselves and proclaim their love before the other. On this occasion, there is only one character that still uses a psychological mask—



Padmini, and does not disclose her plans to both of them. The desire to win Padmini is strong enough for Devadatta to make him cross any boundary.

Kapila, heartbroken pulls his feet away but it is only a diplomatic withdrawal. He knows Padmini will come back to him sooner rather than later. At this moment none other character can observe the true intentions of Kapila because his real self is hidden behind a mask. He has a kind of consolation as Padmini in an aside says to him: “It’s my duty to go with Devadatta. But remember I’m going with your body. Let that cheer you up” (Karnad, 1994, p.2.111). Kapila who appears inconsolable presently is different from within because he has been provided the surety by Padmini that ultimately she would come back to him.

Almost immediately, she tires of the tremendous body and remarkable brain of the magnificent Devadatta, and remembers her taste for the unwashed sweaty smell of Kapila. She starts dreaming and fantasizing about him and their past “... Kapila? What could he be doing now? Where could he be? Could his body be fair still, and his face dark?...” (Karnad, 1994, p.2.119). Karnad makes use of the psychological mask that covers the personal emotions of Padmini from all the other characters on stage. Finally the Dolls are involved to reveal such feelings of Padmini to the audience. One fine day when Devadatta has left for Ujjain, Padmini disguises herself on the pretext of presenting her child the witching fair of the dark forest, goes to meet Kapila asking the villagers, the pilgrims, the hunters, the tribesmen, the way to the woods. It is a mere camouflage because the audience knows the true reason of her visit to the woods. Padmini at the occasion of her meeting with Kapila performs a role play and shows him the son claiming it was his son, “He has the same mole on his shoulder” (Karnad, 1994, p.2.124). Primarily, Kapila resists but this is what he has been hankering after. Kapila’s head too, is anxious to know what his body—previously Devadatta’s—has by now recognized. As Padmini puts it:

Be quiet, stupid. Your body bathed in a river, swam and danced in it. Shouldn’t your head know what river it was? What swim? Your head must too submerge in that river—the flow must rumple your hair, run its tongue in your ears and press your head to its bosom. Until that’s done you will continue to be incomplete... My Kapila! My poor, poor Kapila! How needlessly you’ve tortured yourself. (Karnad, 1994, p.2.127)

In the play, the performers who use masks to disguise their emotions from the others transform into the mask characters one by one. Through the use of disciplined and articulate body language the masks used for the friends Devadatta and Kapila spring to life after

Padmini has swapped their heads. Each mask appears more surprising than the last. In addition to full masks, there are also half-masks that allow speech, and which lead to uproarious interactions with the audience. Half-masks are the ones that cover only part of the body. These masks are used for the friends—Devadatta and Kapila because they make the performance of head swapping possible on stage. This function could not have been possible with the use of full masks. Similarly for the character Hayavadana, once again Karnad has utilized half mask so that the character with the human body and the horse's head can be shown to the audience.

The masks in the play *Hayavadana* (1971) are utilized to tell stories and myths too. The myth of god Ganesha—elephant god being the god of completeness is presented through the mask of Ganesha on stage. Similarly the story regarding the choice of partner by Hayavadana's mother and its link with the story of *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa is narrated through the presentation of Hayavadana—a man with a horse's head. The social and psychological masks the characters wear in this play arouse the curiosity of the audience. The masks are used in plenty of ways and, therefore, play as important role as language itself. These masks on one hand express the physical outlook of the performers and when used psychologically, they reveal the hidden desires and feelings of the characters. We see our hopes and dreams raise a little higher, the realm of possibility expanding. The audience of this play learns from each varied response presented by the numerous masks employed.

Kapila and Padmini simultaneously start drifting towards each other. Kapila worships her loveliness so impulsively that Padmini starts enjoying his visits which were apparently meant for her husband and Kapila's friend. Devadatta tries to postpone the proposed trip on the cart to Ujjain which disappoints Kapila. In an aside, he tells the audience his thoughts:

So it's off. What am I to do for the rest of the day? What am I to do for the rest of the week? Why should it feel as though the whole world has been wiped out for a whole week? Why this emptiness...Kapila, Kapila, get a tight hold on yourself. You are slipping, boy, control yourself. Don't lose that hold. Go now—don't come here again for a week—Devadatta's bound to get angry with you for not coming. Sister-in-law will be annoyed. But don't come back. Go, Go! (Karnad, 1994, p.1.94)

Bearing in mind Kapila's dissatisfaction, Padmini insists on continuing with the plan of going to Ujjain. Kapila is more attractive than Devadatta because as representative of the animal energy in the human, he has greater vitality and potential than Devadatta. Padmini keeps

hiding her attraction for Kapila from her husband Devadatta and keeps her private feelings behind the psychological mask. These, however, are disclosed to the audience through the language Padmini uses for appreciating the strength and vigor of Kapila. On way to Ujjain, Padmini describes the charm of Kapila's body when the latter climbs the tree to bring her the fortune lady's flower:

PADMINI. (*Watching him, to herself.*) How he climbs—like an ape. Before I could even say 'yes', he had taken off his shirt, pulled his dhoti up and swung up the branch. And what an ethereal shape! Such a broad back—like an ocean with muscles rippling across it—and then that small, feminine waist which looks so helpless. (Karnad, 1994, p.1.96)

As Padmini and Kapila go to pay homage to the temple of Rudra, Devadatta immediately decides to visit another temple all alone. The audience observes an unforeseen outburst of emotion by Devadatta when he decides to give up his head to Kali. That he is not capable of bearing the pangs of jealousy becomes evident when he says: "Good-bye, Kapila. Good-bye, Padmini. May the Lord Rudra bless you. You are two pieces of my heart—live happily together. I shall find my happiness in that" (Karnad, 1994, p.1.98), although, he emphasizes that he is doing so to fulfill his previous vow made before Kali:

Bhavani, Bhairavi, Kali, Durga, Mahamaya, Mother of all Nature—I had forgotten my promise to you. Forgive me, mother. You fulfilled the deepest craving of my life—you gave me Padmini—and I forgot my word. Forgive me, for I'm here now to carry out my promise. (Karnad, 1994, p.1.98)

Devadatta's generosity and unselfishness are a mere sham because the real reason of the sacrifice is his refusal to share Padmini with Kapila. On the other hand, the very sight of the dead body of his friend shocks Kapila so much that he also decides to follow suit: "No, Devadatta, I can't live without you. Devadatta, my brother, my father, my friend..." (Karnad, 1994, p.1.100). At the surface level, Kapila proclaims that he has decided to sacrifice his own life out of the love for his dear friend, but actually the audience comes to know that he wants to avert the scandal due to Devadatta's death. Kali in the temple makes it obvious that both Devadatta and Kapila were telling lies.

Padmini is brave and frank in demanding what will fulfill her. When Kali favours her with the blessing of life of the two friends, Padmini happens to transpose the heads with the consequence that there are two men now—one with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body and

the other with Kapila's head and Devadatta's body.

Padmini stumbles on the possibility of having the best of the two men—Devadatta's head and Kapila's body. Devadatta scores a point over Kapila because "According to the *Shastras*, the head is the sign of a man..." (Karnad, 1994, p.1.106). To highlight his point, Devadatta further adds, "Of all the limbs the topmost—in position as well as in importance—is the head" (Karnad, 1994, p.1.107). Kapila stands loser in this ludicrous deal of mixing up of heads. His logic that body stands superior than head and, therefore, Padmini should belong to him is considered ordinary and is rejected by both Padmini and Devadatta. Padmini wants Devadatta's mind and Kapila's body as the society forces her to seek these qualities in one man. But as such a perfect man does not exist, therefore, she creates such a man by transposing the heads.

At the beginning of Act 2, the Bhagavata enquires directly to the audience: "What? What indeed is the solution to this problem, which holds the entire future of these three unfortunate beings in a balance?" (Karnad, 1994, p.2.110). He connects the situation to the one day back in the ages, when King Vikrama being the ruler of the world was asked the similar query by the demon Vetala that which of the people, thus mixed together, was her rightful husband? The King had offered an answer to the puzzle even without batting an eyelid; that one of the two, on whom her husband's head was fixed, was her husband, for the head is the chief of limbs and individual identity depends upon it. But the answer King Vikrama presented to the problem is insufficient, in the present situation. Bhagavata raises this question; will his lucid logical reply supported by the sacred texts appeal to our audience? It is here that Karnad presents the old legend in a new sense, so that it appears relevant to the present-day world. Devadatta, Padmini and Kapila go to a great *rishi* in search of a solution to their problem who, remembering what King Vikrama had said, gave the solution:

As the heavenly Kalpa Vriksha 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. (Karnad, 1994, p.2.110)

Devadatta and Padmini leave for the metropolis where Devadatta enjoys the benefits of Kapila's well-trained body for almost a year. But mankind cannot live with the illusion of perfection for a long time. Padmini's inquiry that must the head always win, becomes relevant when after about a year Devadatta's head fails to enjoy the energy of Kapila's body.

Where Karnad has utilized the half-masks for the friends Devadatta and Kapila, he has used psychological masks in the form of Dolls for Padmini. Padmini does not wear any physical mask but from the beginning of the play till the end, she tries hard to conceal her emotions from her husband and his friend Kapila. These feelings and hidden desires are then revealed to the audience through the use of Dolls that through the utilization of their dialogues convey the psychological state of Padmini. The changes in Devadatta's physical features are conveyed through the dolls. These dolls are, thus, a new technique of the presentation of hidden emotions by Karnad. They serve the function of unmasking the urges and desires nurturing in the hearts and minds of the characters. When Devadatta touches Doll 1, it observes the body being altered and comments that "His palms! They were so rough, when he first brought us here. Like a labourer's. But now they are soft—sickly soft—like a young girl's" (Karnad, 1994, p.2.116). Similarly the second doll notices the change in stomach saying "His stomach. It was so tight and muscular. Now..." (Karnad, 1994, p.2.116).

The first doll has also noted it and, hence, completes the sentence saying "It's loose..." (Karnad, 1994, p.2.116). Slowly an important change is observed in the life of the two male protagonists, i.e., Devadatta's head with Kapila's body regains its former self—a fragile body. Padmini who had earlier felt that she had achieved the company of the most excellent person gets gradually disillusioned. Once more, she starts missing Kapila, his impulsiveness and his physical strength. She has enjoyed this present relationship for a year but cannot do so any more. As a result, Devadatta once more loses Padmini to Kapila. Both Devadatta and Kapila understand that sensuous pleasures of the body cannot be escaped. Padmini confirms this when she once again abandons Devadatta to stay with the real Kapila who has trained Devadatta's body.

Working dishonesty on her husband, she convinces Devadatta to go to the Ujjain fair to get new dolls for the child but in reality Padmini has utilized this trip for her husband as pretense so that she can get back to the embrace of Kapila. She takes the child with her and claims it to be the child of both Devadatta and Kapila. Kapila finds himself in a perplexed situation and asks Padmini: "Why should one tolerate this mad dance of incompleteness?" (Karnad, 1994, p.2.126).

The focus of the play, though, is on Padmini, the lady who is faced with this impossible situation: how would a woman take it if it actually happened and would it really solve the problem. Both Devadatta and Kapila fascinate Padmini, and this creates the problem. The two

men cannot accept each other when it comes to sharing a woman and all the three destroy themselves in the procedure. When Devadatta reaches the woods, he asks Kapila:

DEVADATTA. Tell me one thing. Do you really love Padmini?

KAPILA. Yes

DEVADATTA. So do I.

KAPILA. I know. [*Silence*] Devadatta, couldn't we all three live together—like the Pandavas and Draupadi?

DEVADATTA. What do you think? [*Silence. Padmini looks at them but doesn't say anything*]

DEVADATTA. That's why I brought this. [*Shows the sword*] What won't end has to be cut.

KAPILA. I got your body—but not your wisdom. (Karnad, 1994, p.2.129)

The two have to die and decrease the very personality of their beloved—Padmini to ashes. The play ends with Devadatta and Kapila fighting a duel in which the heads roll again. When both the friends are dead, Padmini decides to do sati. Before sacrificing herself, Padmini makes it obvious that she cannot hope to get perfection even in her next life. As she prays to the Mother of all nature, she says “Kali, Mother of all Nature, you must have your joke now. Other women can die praying that they should get the same husband in all the lives to come. You haven't left me even that little consolation” (Karnad, 1994, p.2.131). The scene then shifts to the child of Padmini. He grows up as Kapila's child in the woods and at the age of five is given over to a traveler going to the city to be delivered into the hands of his grandparents. This is in agreement with what Padmini had told Bhagavata:

My son is sleeping in the hut. Take him under your care. Give him to the hunters who live in this forest and tell them it's Kapila's son. They loved Kapila and will bring the child up. Let the child grow up in the forest with the rivers and the trees. When he's five take him to the Reverend Brahmin Vidyasagara. Tell him it's Devadatta's son. (Karnad, 1994, p.2.131)

At the age of five, the child lives in a world of make-believe. He plays with dolls and refuses to converse with any person. As Actor 1 says in the following lines:

Children of his age should be out-talking a dictionary, but this one doesn't' speak a word. Doesn't laugh, doesn't cry, doesn't even smile. The same long face all twenty-four hours. There's obviously something wrong with him... (Karnad, 1994, p.2.134).

This abnormal child has never laughed by itself. M.K. Naik suggests that “Modern man must recover his sense of childlike curiosity, wonder and amusement at the sheer incongruity of life in order to achieve integration” (1984, p.196). The conclusion of the main plot shows that caught in a strange situation, Devadatta and Kapila try to find some amicable solution to their problem but fail to do so. Then they have a duel, thinking that whosoever will win will have the claim over Padmini. But none survives and Padmini is left with no choice except performing Sati knowing not for whom she is making this sacrifice. The story of the sub-plot too contributes towards the development of the action of the play when Hayavadana in turn becomes a complete horse, losing his human voice. The ending of the play further highlights the fact that a human being is never satisfied with whatever he is provided with. He always struggles hard to attain perfection in his life and whatever belongs to him. But as soon as he gets the desired perfection or completion, the man starts his venture for the conversion of something incomplete into completion. It is because there is a hidden love for incompleteness that attracts the man towards itself. In the play *Hayavadana* (1971), we have the example of the child who also gets attracted towards the character of Hayavadana because of the incomplete personality of this being.

#### 4. Conclusion

The masks presented demand a good deal of introspection and concentration. Each mask we have in the play is somehow a self-exploration that eventually comes to life through movement in the theatre. A theatre is nevertheless an energetically charged space and it is through the usage of such verified masks by Karnad that the audience becomes full of anticipation and excitement. At the end Bhagavata provides irony when he prays for “a little bit of sense” (Karnad, 1994, p.2.139) for the rulers. With this last line becomes complete the circle of irony that started with the “mask” (Karnad, 1994, p.1.73) on an empty “chair” (Karnad, 1994, p.1.73).

When the characters in this play *Hayavadana* (1971) use masks, the intent is not to hide behind them, but rather to use the unconscious as a direct path for revelation of the otherwise hidden truth. Therefore, it is utilized as a psychological tool to expose and drive inward. The whole purpose of using masks in this context is to orchestrate specific emotions among both the performers and the audience. The emotions that characterize the masks are diverse. Other masks are cheerful, sometimes even comic. No possible expression of the inner soul has been

missed.

We are never all that we would like to be, or feel that we could be. On most days we feel we have the steadiness of a singular identity, although we are more or less aware that we are many faceted beings. Masks encourage imagination. For modern man, the mask may not represent the face of god, but rather one of the many faces of himself. Karnad in his play *Hayavadana* (1971) has, therefore, turned to the mask to dramatize philosophical or psychological divisions within the characters.

I have explored the origin and the development of the masks by the Greeks, and how the Indian theatre has introduced another dimension in this field with reference to the play *Hayavadana* (1971). There are certain occasions where we find that Karnad has reverted to the Greek usage of the masks where they are worn to disguise or deceive but simultaneously the introduction of transformative elements in their use make his use of masks a unique experience for the audience.

I have examined the innovations Karnad has brought about in the usage of masks in his play *Hayavadana* (1971). Karnad has reversed the traditional role of masks of concealing reality as he has used them to reveal the hidden reality. Karnad's masks behave in a unique fashion; where the one set of masks is telling lies, the other supports the truth. It has been observed that in a conventional Greek mask usage, a single frozen expression on the mask is shown to the audience but Karnad has utilized the mask to expose multiple hidden emotions. In this way, we observe the mask performing the function of an exposition rather than the assumed role of hiding feelings from the audience and the other characters in the play. Therefore, it is not only the physical expressions that are revealed to us but also the psychological and the emotional aspects of characters in a play.

The masks in this play are utilized for interpretation, exposition and the expression of desire. We find all the characters within the play leading a double life and it is the use of mask that makes it convenient for the playwright to present that these characters are more concerned with what the others feel rather than what they actually desire. We can indubitably see the



materialization of the playwright's desire to give modern interpretation to mythology. It is through this exceptional use of masks that three different facets of a single character are shown within the play. For example, the very character Hayavadana is partly a celestial, a human, and an animal being.

Karnad has achieved multiple purposes with the help of a single mask within the play. In this regard he has used variety of theatrical techniques in the play which perform the same role as is performed by the masks such as the use of dolls as mask for Padmini and the stage setting which executes the same function as the physical masks worn by the characters. These theatrical techniques are either the modification of the traditionally used ones or the innovation by Karnad for the very first time in this play *Hayavadana* (1971). The single mask, therefore, presents a number of meanings to the characters present on stage and a number of interpretations for the spectators watching it. It is also interesting to note how one character in the play enjoys power over another character through the invisible mask that he wears. It is through the use of these masks that Karnad has questioned religious values and challenged the traditional norms by presenting Ganesha as an incomplete deity, and enhancing the theme of incompleteness in the play.

A new form of mask in *Hayavadana* (1971) in the form of the psychological mask has also been explored. These masks in the play have the power to transform the ordinary into extraordinary. Karnad has reawakened our attraction with the transformative power of masks whether they are presented as horrifying, thought provoking or just hilarious for the audience. It is the body language or the philosophical debate between Devadatta and Kapila that helps the audience in understanding their otherwise hidden feelings. The moves of Kapila to please Padmini show that he is over-eager to make Padmini happy when he shows his emotions to her by bringing a mound of flowers. The desire to win Padmini is strong enough to make him transcend any boundary.

Similarly, the psychological mask of Padmini reveals to the audience that very soon she gets fed up with the tremendous body and brain of Devadatta, and recalls her taste for the unwashed sweaty stench of Kapila. When Devadatta leaves for Ujjain in the play, Padmini disguises herself at the excuse of presenting her child the witching fair of the dark wood, goes

to meet Kapila asking the villagers, the pilgrims, the hunters, the tribesmen, the way to the woods. The emotional and psychological aspects are thus given expression, which without the masks could have remained obscure. This way Karnad has made use of half-masks along with the full masks that permit speech. At the end of the play, the mystery of Hayavadana being an animal figure or a human figure is resolved by the “neigh” (Karnad, 1994, p.2.138) which indicates that the transformation is now complete as a horse.

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