

The Preference Of Physique In Girish Karnad's "Hayavadhana"

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Girish Karnad (1938 – 2019) belongs to the lineage of Indian playwrights and specifically of Kannada literature. He has also made a name for himself as an accomplished actor and a filmmaker. Many of his plays were originally written in Kannada, an Indian language spoken mostly by the people of Karnataka, a southern Indian state. His plays deal with issues that are relevant to both individuals and the general public. He masterfully weaves together old stories and history with present events. His methods are one-of-a-kind and appropriate.

Physical charm and physical attraction too are significant in maintaining a relationship, especially a marital one is established by Girish Karnad's play Hayavadana. Traditionally men have the privilege of choosing their partners. Most polygamous societies are male-dominated, and men have the sole right to marry; many wives and women are denied the right to have many husbands. Most significant religions permit men to possess many wives, but strangely enough, women are not allowed to do the same. Women are taught to be subservient to their husbands despite the shortcoming of their male counterparts. A famous commonly used Tamil proverb goes like this .'A husband is a husband whether he is a stone or a strand of grass'. But the same yardstick is not applied to men. Men are expected to remarry if they find any flaw in their wives in their character or physique. Such privilege is not likely to be enjoyed by women who have deformed or sterile husbands.

They are expected to put up with such men how abusive or useless they are. But this scenario is fast changing as women too are becoming as emancipated as men. Women have begun to sue their husbands for impotence, adultery, and mental disorders as reasons for divorce. Men try to intimidate women by leashing violence and harassment of all kinds against them, but, indeed, days are not far when women, too, will be as liberated as men. Unlike in the past, women are exposed to the vastness of knowledge. Matters related to sex have long ago been out of a list of taboo topics. In the olden times, women did have only a little understanding of sexual pleasure or the different shapes and sizes of the male genital organ. Married women believed that their husbands are the 'be all and end all' of sexual relationships. But things are changing in lights speed, thanks to the availability of information on the internet in pictures and videos. These pictures and videos give a good knowledge of the variety of sexual pleasures. Women have begun to expect much from their partners. The sex industry is bustling in creating pornographic videos and picture shots. This has added to women's imagination, and they hope their partners to satisfy them in the like of the videos they have watched. When this is not fulfilled, it results in frustration, and women expect sex from the men available. Sex is something that demands much from men and little from women. Men have to achieve an erection if they have to have sexual intercourse. The erection has to be maintained for a considerable time; the ejaculation must be delayed at least for a reasonable time to satisfy a partner. Modern men suffer from so many defects like low testosterone level, which leads to low libido, premature ejaculation, anxiety over the penis size, which further adds to the stress

leading to partial erection or no erection. Men too watch videos where they see penises in large sizes.

These results in a conviction of the inadequacy related to the size of their organs. This small penis syndrome kills the libido or interest in sex. Today's flourishing businesses are the sale of aphrodisiac drugs -- drugs that claim to improve testosterone level or the size of the penises. Surgeries, pumps, exercises, supplements, pills, lotions, hormone therapies, and physical methods like jelqing and traction make their rounds in the market. Anxious men fall prey to these advertisements. The female perception of sexual intimacy, too, has changed drastically. Being fed with the knowledge of the various nuances of sex had been the monopolized domain of the male sex and the few women involved in the sex trade: modern women expect much from men. The days of women tolerating relationships with men they are not attracted to and those they do not feel loved and desired have passed by. Besides these, the topic of sex from time immemorial labeled as taboo is no longer considered a taboo.

Women discuss their sexual experiences or abuse on public platforms. They are no longer shy of openly talking about their expectations and preferences in sex. Oral sex, anal sex, fellatio that were once considered a shame in a marital relationship is acknowledged no longer necessary to be avoided. The female expectation in matters related to sex is on the rise, and the male anxiety to perform has also risen drastically, adversely affecting the quality of sex. Stress and fear of non-performance up to the mark have taken a toll on many marriages. Extramarital affairs have become very common.

Indian Society, in general, is known to be monogamous with strict rules governing marital relationships. Any attempt by women to overlook these rules are condemned and viewed condescendingly by society. As mentioned above, the technological advancement and the possibility of being close with men in workplaces or public places or contacts with men and women through public platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and numerous other chat sites and porn sites have increased the incidents of illicit relationships. News reports of abandoning the partners and children and eloping with lovers, and murders of partners or children are constantly rising.

Girish Karnad, in his play Hayavadhana, has realistically portrayed women's preference for partners. This is groundbreaking work. The choice of a woman to choose her partner based on her preferences is insisted. The love of women for the physical relationship outside marriage is also brought out. Devayani falls in fascination with Kapila's physique at the very first sight. His lower position in the casteist society prevents her from openly declaring her love for him and propose him for marriage. She accepts Devadatta's proposal having in mind the physical charm and sex appeal of Kapila and her possible proximity with him and a probable physical relationship. Being a blacksmith and a wrestler, his physique has developed well. Even being wedded to Devadatta, her eyes and mind are constantly on Kapila, and she admires him secretly. The proximity and availability of men with such attractive features may end up in a physical relationship.

There are certain physical and behavioral traits women find attractive in men. Various studies have found out that 1. Six package abs, 2. Toned posterior, 3. height. 4. a light beard. 5. a strong jawline 6. Broad shoulders 7. thick eyebrows 8. Full lips 9. High cheekbones 10. An attractive smile, and 11. A Sense of humor could create strong impressions on women. The keynote of the play -- the dominance of the physique over intellect -- is struck at the beginning of the

play as a horse-faced man named 'Hayavadhana', meaning 'horse-faced', narrates his parentage. Hayavadana's mother was the princess of Karnataka.

She was gorgeous. When she came of age, her father called for 'swayamvara' an invitation to the princes and kings of the kingdoms to parade or show off their mettle and capture her attention and allow her to choose one among them. Many princes from countries came to take part in it. The last one to arrive was the prince of Araby sitting on a great white stallion. She looked at him and instantly fainted. Her father immediately decided to marry her off to him. On the day of marriage, she stubbornly refused to marry him; instead, she preferred to marry the stallion. She could not be dissuaded and was married off to the White Stallion. This outright rejection of the human being for a stallion is quite bewildering perplexing, and animalistic, amounting to bestiality. It is the ever-developing- evolving intellect that differentiates a human being from an animal. The princess rejects it and chooses an animal for the union. Critics who have analyzed the text as a story of man's quest for perfection or a perfect combination of mind and body have got the story wrong.

Karnad categorically presents the dominance of the physical over both the spiritual and the intellectual. He reiterates it in the further development of the story Karnad harps on the physique's power and the struggle between the intellect and the instincts. In the struggle between the so-called baser and the higher, the former wins the battle, and the loser serves the winner. Karnad explicitly presents it in the story. After fifteen years of marital relationship with the princess, the stallion turns into a Celestial being released of a curse. He wants the princess to accompany him to the heavenly abode. The princess refuses to go with him and asks him to take the shape of the horse.

The angry celestial being curses her to become a horse. She turns into a horse and "runs away happily", presumably searching for a horse partner. This story has an analogy in the western fairy tale. The fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast" is quite similar to this story to some extent. A beautiful girl, after much deliberation, falls in love with a beast and saves him from his curse and death with her kiss of love. The power of love in her kiss relieves him of his curse and turns him into a handsome prince. Like any fairy tale, the story has a happy end. But there is a doubt: how could the girl live happily with the prince in his natural form if she has loved him in his beast form? The question remains unanswered. The tale of the princess of Karnataka is quite convincing.

The tale of the princess of Karnataka foreshadows the main action of the play. The tale is symbolic. The issues discussed in the play are pretty similar. Resemblance could be found among the characters. Padmini is the alter ego of the princess. Kapila is the horse in the sense that he serves as the emissary of Devadatta to woo Padmini like the Princess Padmini too is enamored by the physical charm of Kapila, the carrier of the proposal. She never admires Devadatta's intellectual ability; instead, she is fascinated by and obsessed with the physical charm of Kapila. She is obsessed with him, pays undue attention to him, and eagerly expects his presence and not Devadatta's.

Kapila understands Padmini's nature at the very first sight that she could only be satisfied by a man with a powerful physique and not by a person like Devadatta, who is fragile. He says to himself, "He is not for the like of you; what she needs is a man of steel" later, Devadatta too understands his inability to capture the attention of Padmini, and she is irresistibly drawn towards the physical charm of Kapila. She spends much of the time doting Kapila "to hop around him twittering Kapila!.. every minute "(21). Karnad has given explicit evidence in the

play to demonstrate Padmini's admiration for Kapila at the expense of Devadatta. On their way to the fair, Padmini admires the physical beauty of Kapila, who was climbing a tree:

Padmini: [aside]. He is like a celestial being reborn as a hunter. ... How his body sways, his limbs curve – it's a dance almost...No woman could resist him. (26)

The intellect is admired, but the physical is enjoyed the victory of the sensual, the primal, the primordial, the instinct, the primitive, the wild, the raw, the original, and uncivilized in every human being established in the play. Padmini is not only a character in the play. She stands for the race. Though intellect is claimed superior, it could not give the satisfaction the physical could provide. It is not the intellectual union that is possible; the only possibility is the physical union. The ecstasy is achieved only in sex. The union is achieved only through sex where they become "one flesh", and there is nothing like "one intellect". Padmini hates Devadatta's intellect because it keeps him away from her. Padmini knows that it is the yearning of the body that could draw her 'husband close to her'. Padmini does not prefer the smell of the sandal oil her husband uses; instead, she likes the distinctive 'strong, male smell', 'the unwashed sweaty smell' of Kapila. She wants him to maintain his body. She mildly expresses her irritation over Devadatta's spending time on his studies by asking him to practice swimming and playing other sports. She outrightly slams Devadatta's reminder about his caste and duty with her condescending reply, "I have heard all that"(46). When Devadatta reiterates it, she gets irritated and replies typically in the 'south Indian wife way': Devadatta. It was fun the first few days because it was new. All that muscle and strength. But how long can one go on like that? I have the family tradition to maintain – the daily reading, writing, and studies....

Padmini. I don't know (bolded to highlight)

Padmini likes Kapila's "rough laborer's hands", "palms like wood", "grip like a vice".

Devadatta's interest in studies and his lack of physical exercise must have gradually lowered his testosterone levels; the childbirth, too, might have brought a gap in their physical closeness. His body, too, is losing its shape. The dolls that function as the chorus observe the change. The dolls, too to some extent, serve as Padmini's alter ego. Perhaps Karnad doesn't want to be very blunt in portraying Padmini's carnal desires, so he has made the doll's voice out her thoughts. After a long gap, Devadatta touches Padmini's shoulders 'she suddenly shudders.'(46). Devadatta asks why she replies that she had goosebumps, but the real reason is brought out through the dolls in conversations that follow the incident.

Doll II: Why? What happened?

Doll I: He touched me, and..... Doll II. Yes?

Doll I: His palms! They were so rough when he first brought us here like laborers. But now they are soft – sickly soft – like a young girl's.

Doll II: I know. I've noticed something too.

Doll I: What?

Doll II: His stomach. It was so tight and muscular. Now... Doll, I know. It's loose...

Doll II: Do you think it'll swell up too? (47).

Padmini's interest in sex renews after the period of childbirth. During this period, Devadatta has lost his shape and his interest in physical union. Padmini is upset and irritated about the changes in Devadatta's physique. She still yearns for the muscular body perfumed with the scented sweat of labor and the rough hands that work on her body. Devadatta cannot fulfill Padmini's sexual instincts and expectations. These prolonged unfulfilled desires and yearning for a union with a muscular body within the social norms have led Padmini to have sex dreams frequently. Freud calls such dreams an expression of "erotic wishes" (520). The dolls – Padmini's conscience – reports it to the audience.

Doll I: Behind her eyelids. She is dreaming.

....

Doll I: A man

Doll II: But not her husband

....

Doll II: You can see now. Not very nice – enough. Like a laborer's. But he's got a nice body – looks soft.

....

Doll I: There he is again.

Doll II: In the middle of the day?

Doll I: [doubtful]. I'm not sure this is the usual visitor. This one looks rougher and darker.

...

Doll II: Especially last night – I mean – that dream.

Doll I: Tut- tut – one shouldn't talk about such things! Doll II. It was so shameless... (48, 49, 51).

She leaves Devadatta and goes to the forest in search of Kapila. She finds Kapila and seduces him with her lecture of finding 'completion' in physical union:

Padmini. Be quiet, stupid. Your body bathed in the river, swam, and danced in it. Shouldn't your head know what river it was, what swim? Your head too must 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 is done, you'll continue to be incomplete...(58).

Padmini insists on the supremacy of the physical over the intellect in a marital relationship. The mind, too, must be submerged in the river of lust to achieve a complete union. The transposition of heads, as critics claim, is not Padmini's wish to get the best of both the physical and the mental instead; it is her wish to fall in terms with the marital norms of the society and still getting what she wants - physical union with Kapila. The characters in the play live in traditional Indian culture and are sensitive to the opinions of society. Padmini's act of the transposition of the heads is an act of the subconscious upon the conscious in the pretext of delirium to execute what she yearns for and console herself of not breaching social norms to which her conscience is regulated. When Devadatta kills himself in Kali temple, Kapila fears being blamed for killing him for Padmini. Padmini is afraid of being ostracized by society as a widow. Their death at the end of the play, too, is the result of social fear. The victory of the earthy 'base' instincts, the feral, is perfectly established when Hayavadhana is turned into a horse. Hayavadhana's narration of how he is made 'complete' could establish the argument of the paper:

Hayavadhana, The goddess, appeared. Very prompt, But looked instead put out. She said – rather peevishly. I thought – 'Why don't you people go somewhere else if you want to chop off your stupid heads? Why do you have to come to me? I fell at her feet and said, ' Mother make me complete', She said "So be it" and disappeared – even before I could say ' Make me a complete man'! I became a horse. (68)

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