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## **Hayavadana & Naga Mandala (Naga Cult of Kerala): Existing Traditions**

**Mr. Kuldeep Singh**

PhD Scholar,

Jaipur National University,

Jaipur, Ashok Vihar Colony Gurudwara Road

Dholpur, India

### **Abstract**

The ultimate desire of every human being is to get perfection and people do not accept reality. Even people want to change their natural physical being into their own imagined self. Resultantly, remain almost same. *Hayavadana* majorly talks about this urge of human beings. *Nagamandal* talks on the traditions of sacrifice and the suppressed desires of human beings. If anything is desired by heart then God helps to fulfill those desires. Rani passes the chastity test by the help of Naga and proves her righteousness though she had physical relation with Naga.

**Keywords-** *Nagamandal, Kathasaritasagara, Vakratunda-Mahakaya, Identity, Completeness*

### Introduction

The topic of the play *Hayavadana* is exhibited in the beginning. As soon the dramatization begins, a startled on-screen character shows up. It is amazed to listen that he had man's body and steed's head. At the point when Hayavadana goes to the stage, he inquires as to why he is having such a head. Hayavadana addressed that he had done nothing criminal but he is the consequence of infringement of good codes by his mom. He at that point recounted his mom's stories. His mom was a princess of Karnataka. She enjoyed a white stallion and become hopelessly enamored with him at the main sight and after that additionally got hitched to him. In any case, one day, that steed was changed into his unique being - The Gandharva. He requested that the princess wanted go with him to Heaven however she denied. So the Gandharva reviled her to end up a stallion herself. She fled joyfully allowing her tyke to sit unbothered. Hence from that date, Hayavadana constantly attempted to end up total man. Hayavadana proposes it in the earliest reference point. He needs to dispose of his stallions head so he has gone to numerous religious and heavenly places.

Girish Karnard is showing the old proved thought that head is the controlling part of the body and with the outer as well as the inner structure. Hayavadana having the horse head and human body is struggling to have a complete human motif. It is difficult to possess a horse head. To understand it with empathy one has to imagine the working process of horse head which is not at all as the working of a human being. It is clash that to run the human body having the brain and structure of an animal. Eternally having such appearance is also awkward; it seems such person is cursed to lead such a strange life.

Hayavadana is based on an old fashioned folk tale of Madanasundari from the collection the Kathasaritasagara by Somadeva; the tale of Padmini in it is the real source of this work. She is in the contention that head is an important part and she is found at the Durga temple where her husband and their sibling is in this discussion. She wants to get the sturdy body of his brother in law and the face of her husband as she got married with him. At the end of this folk tale, she gets what she wants by somehow.

Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* endeavors to center an idea inner and out that head is the ace of the human body as this psychology handed on in the folktales. It challenges the regular propensity for individuals to acknowledge the outright standards went through the methods for such vintage tales. That is inferred because the play begins with Gajavadana or summon of Ganesha no longer simply to execute a way of life but as a substitute to solicit the centrality from the statute that head oversees the frame. Bhagavata or Sutradhara methods the rationale behind the magnification of Ganesha because the lord Ganesha is the ruler and ace of flawlessness in spite of his creature head and human frame:

O Elephant-headed Herambha Whose flag is victory.. And who shines like a thousand suns, .... O single-tusked destroyer of incompleteness. / We pay homage to you and start our play. ... An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly- / Whichever way you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness. ...How indeed... *Vakratunda-Mahakaya*, with his crooked face and his distorted body, is the Lord and Master of Success and Perfection? ... this *Mangalamoorty*, intends to signify by his very appearance that completeness of God is something no poor mortal can comprehend. (Hayavadana, 1; 2006)

Bhagavata's query on Ganesha unquestionably undermines the clear acknowledgment of the standard that head administers the body. Similarly, it likewise subverts the everyday conviction that a human head on human frame method symmetry that's basic for thinking about an identification finish or exquisite. The significance of this is reflected particularly in 21st century as the need of gifted and physically fit individuals are required to do smart work. As it is said that our face is the list of the identity and makes the impression of our splendors. Up to a surviving this is additionally demonstrated right yet considering soul substandard compared to our looks is thoroughly off-base. Regardless, Bhagavata additionally perceives the way that the lord Ganesha exists invulnerable for any doubt:

It is not for us to understand this Mystery or try to unravel it. Nor is it within our powers to do so. Our duty is merely to pay homage to the Elephant-headed god and get on with our play (ibid, 2006)

A different sort of character was required to question the social taboo of considering the head in the human body supreme. So, the character with horse head and human body is a perfect choice to do it.

As Karnad says:

...it is unfair to challenge the thesis of the riddle by using a God. God after all is beyond all human logic, indeed beyond all human comprehension itself... the dialectic had to grow out of grosser ground and I sensed a third being hovering in the spaces between the divine and the human- the horse head man. (Dodiya, 1999)

The issue of a person who is not similar to others look wise is raised by Karnad. His desire to end up as an entire human shows that closeness in appearance is an essential to pick up acknowledgment amidst individuals. Peculiarity like that of god isn't at all helpful for the steed head animal which infers that he has a place with minority areas of society who never-endingly take a stab at acknowledgment in the midst of the dominant part gatherings. A Critic mentions that the stallion faced human epitomizes the subject of acceptance of such personalities in the society:

...Hayavadana comes from two different worlds, but does not feel at home either. He represents the divided self of the post-colonial subject- a character attempting to decolonize his own mind. (Mee, 2008, 144)

Hayavadana heads on multiple religious places to recover and he find it all helpless. He shares this thought with Bhagavata that though he visited many pilgrimages but he is not conferred the human completeness by changing his horse head to the head of a common person. Bhagvata advises him to visit Kali Mandir for the fulfillment of his desire. Here the thought process of a religion bound person is very much reflected. One has to keep faith or one wants to be in illusion fo changing the changing the worse situations blindly. Bhagavata's final words, 'May you become successful in your search for completeness' (Hayavadana, 11; 2006) indicates that he can be hopeful but without guarantee that the success would be awaiting him. Everyone is running after completeness as Padmini in the tale for a complete man and Hayavadna for a complete human form.

Expecting the flawlessness in all figure and forms is a desire which cannot be fulfilled all the times, and through a chorus it is reflected in the text.

Why should love stick to a single 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. A head for each breast. A pupil for each eye. A side for each arm. I have neither regret nor shame... (Hayavadana, 11; 2006)

Padmini is trapped intentionally to have relation with two men at the coast of fulfilling his desire of getting close to a sturdy man. She is now close to two friends Kapila and Devdatta. The latter is Brahmin and remain engrossed in books and the former Kapila is a son of ironsmith remain busy in wrestling matches.

They are called "one mind one heart". (ibid, 2006) Padmini outshines Kapila with her witty boldness and she is treated as a rebel in the society; in one instance she proves that meanings of the words are not fixe so as the master of the house cannot be always the father of the kids and vice versa:

PADMINI : Do you want my father or do you want the master of this house?

KAPILA : Aren't they the same?

PADMINI: Listen, my father could be a servant in this house. Or the master of this house could be my father's servant. My father could be the master's father, brother, father's servant. My father could be the master's father, brother, son-in-law, cousin grandfather or uncle. Do you agree? (Hayavadana, 18; 2006)

Padmini works as a character that is against the social taboos. Though she is married to a Brahmin boy Devdatta and she is expected to perform as an obedient wife. She is highly attracted by

the sturdy physic of Kapila and the fragile motif of Devdatta was the major cause of her dissatisfaction. Kali's words that 'there should be a limit even to honesty' (Hayavadana, 33; 2006) indicates that Padmini cannot hide her feeling for the sturdy body of Kapila and she lurks to have him with her. Becoming an over moralistic or honest person has never been a good idea in any time of span in the history of the world. So, this is a practical message to everyone that we need to look as the others look and we need to act as the others are doing. Moving otherwise in life must lead a fellow towards dissatisfaction.

In her communication with Kapila, Padmini opposes the standard conviction that lady must be essentially respectful in her disposition towards a man. This announcement uncovers the free soul of an individual as nobody needs to stay bound. Truth be told, the female chorale uncovered her bizarre nature comfortable beginning of the play. In any case, Padmini was convinced to the ordinary conviction that head controls the body keeping this in mind the end goal to satisfy her goal of having an entire man with the mix of the cerebrum and strength. In this way, when the dissident follows a customary standard just to fulfill her egotistical intrigue, the result is heartbreaking. Kapila says: One beats the body into shape, but one can't beat away the memories in it. Isn't that surprising? ...Memories of touch, memories of a body swaying in these arms, of a warm skin against his palm-memories which one cannot recognize, cannot understand, cannot even name because this head wasn't there when they happened... (Hayavadana, 58; 2006)

The opinion of Kapila that the body is in itself a separate thing which is run by head but it has its own feelings. When Davdatta finds Padmini with Kapila, She runs from there and decides to immolate herself as sati. She requests Devdatta to bring up her kid as Brahmin and make him learn wrestling. Erin Mee notes:

Padmini's Sati marks her devotion not to one man but to two. Her sati is not an expression of loyal devotion to a husband, but to the fulfillment of her own desire and her disregard for societal convention. She refuses to conform to the traditional image of an ideal woman. (Mee, 2008, 147)

There is not fix meaning of this play; one can extract as many conclusions as one wants form the text; the same is reflected in the philosophy of French philosopher Jaques Derrida: Any text inevitably undermines its own claims to have a determinate meaning, and licenses the reader to produce his own meanings out of it by an activity of semantic 'freeplay'.

Hayavadana, originally written in Kannada by the young playwright Girish Karnad translated into English by the author is now a famous work which has been heralded as the origin of a contemporary Indian theater based on traditional folk theater. Karnad's play, however, is not based

simply on the eleventh-century Indian text; it reworks Mann's version of the story as well and Karnad says that he is indebted to *The Transposed Heads* by Mann for the plot of Devadatta and Kapila.

Hayavadana in this manner presents us with an uncommon chance to think about the culturally diverse treatment of a solitary story. The short Brahmin illustration turns into an unexpected German novella in the early piece of the twentieth century and comes back to India in the 1970s as society theater. Karnad's decision in revamping the anecdote from the *Kathasaritsagar* does not shock anyone since he has already composed two plays in light of Indian myth and history.

Karnad is also found misrepresenting the characters of Mann's Novell. In the description and narration of characters in this text are found losing their individuality and just become representational. For examples, Nanda, the cowherd and metal forger, moves toward becoming Kapila, a wrestler and smith. Schridaman moves toward becoming Devadatta, an educated Brahmin and artist, whose mind is dependably in another place. Sita is transformed into Padmini, the daughter of a rich merchant whose beauty exceeds even her sauciness (Dodiya 33).

Hayavadana, as the name suggests, is a man with a horse's head (Haya = horse and vadana = face); (Dodiya 191). The marriage of Padmini with Devdatta was an unhappy one from the beginning. To see that Padmini was attracted to the physic of Kapila and Kapila was also dreaming for her then Devadatta was consumed in jealousy. A few months after the marriage, the three travel to Ujjain to a fair. Meanwhile on their way, they rested between two temples, one of Rudra (Shiva) and the other of goddess Kali. Both the friends behead themselves because of this clash where both are attracted for the same girl and by killing themselves they wanted to prove their friendship. Padmini was pregnant that time and got afraid as she could be blamed for their deaths; In the resulting thought she decides to kill herself. However, the goddess Kali stops her and assures her to make both the boys alive again. Padmini rearranges the heads so that Devadatta's head is on Kapila's body and vice versa and asks the goddess to do her magic. Kali resignedly comments that "there should be a limit even to honesty" (Nagamandal 2:33) and brings the two men back to life.

In the confusion that ensues after the transposition of heads, Padmini makes it clear that she wants to be with the Devadatta head but with Kapila body. Her wish is granted by an ascetic who mediates the conflicting claims from both men to be her husband. With his new body Devadatta returns to the city with Padmini and they begin a blissful marital life. At this point Karnad introduces two dolls that Devadatta presents to Padmini as gifts for the expected child. Through their own dialogues, the dolls describe the dynamic changes occurring in the family. They document the change of Devadatta's body from its rough muscular Kapila-nature to a soft, pot-bellied Brahmin body. They tell that Padmini has given birth to a disfigured baby boy and that she has now begun dreaming about

Kapila again. The dolls also become the theatrical device through which Padmini sends Devadatta to Ujjain, so she can use his absence to sneak away with the child to the forest where Kapila resides (Dodiya 183). Back in the woodland, Padmini finds the harsh and solid Kapila once more. He is astonished to see Padmini, and she uncovers her want for his very much built body. Devadatta, equipped with a sword and two new dolls, finds the darlings, and the two men choose to murder each other since their affection for Padmini can't be accommodated. Padmini at that point chooses to confer Sati. She endows the kid to Bhagavata and leaves guidelines for him to be brought up both as Kapila's child and as Devadatta's child.

Kali has addressed the supplications of Hayavadna, it appears, by taking out his human physical attributes through and through. By the by, despite everything he has a human voice and is singing energetic melodies. Hayavadana starts laughing in a suppressed manner when he watches the performers and Bhagavata. His laughter changes into the neighing of a horse and he turn into a complete horse.

Davdatta in insightful man and the kapil the man with robust body both are in the love triangle of Padmini; Finally, the coveted desire of Padmini to get the body of Kapila and head of Devdatta came true. The goddess kali is shown totally indifferent to the greed of human beings as Padmini changes the heads according to her greed or need but there is no objection from the goddess. It is a bit objectionable in the story.

After the exchange the heads, the condition remains painful for Padmini; She thought that she got what she wanted by transposing the head but the reverse happened; Kapila and Devdatta both became the same as they were; the slight distinction was that Devdatta stopped writing and kapila wrestling.

At the end of the story the creature head changes the body totally and wins over the thought of becoming complete man. It leaves the readers into a great surprise and shock; It gives lot of implied meanings and the interpretation depends on the mindset of the reader.

Karnad uses the conventions and motifs of folk tales and folk theatre – masks, curtain, dolls, and the story-within-a-story-to create a bizarre world. His plays plot revolves around a world of incomplete individuals, indifferent gods, dolls that speak and children who cannot, a world unsympathetic to the desire and frustration, joys and sorrows of human beings. What is real is only the tremendous, absurd energy of the horse and its rider who move around the stage symbolizing the powerful but monotonous rhythm of life. Karnad's work has the tone and expression of great drama. He has the outstanding ability and the power to transform any situation into an aesthetic experience. It

has often been noted that these two plays work like companion pieces, despite being separated in time by seventeen years. (Dharwadker xxvi)

Critical studies of *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala* have focused largely on the themes (identity, completeness) and techniques (the role of the narrator, the use of masks, dolls) in the plays; there have also been postcolonial and feminist readings. Take Erin Mee's essay on *Hayavadana*, which demonstrates "the many ways it provided a model for decolonizing modern Indian theatre," (Mee 146) or Anupama Mohan's feminist reading of *Naga-Mandala*. The delineation of "folk" elements used by Karnad in his plays and the presence of myth have also figured dominantly; for instance in the same essay Mee refers to the Yakshagana style of performance having influenced *Hayavadana*. There are also the essays of Moutushi Chakravartee and Jose George, the latter in fact locating the story of the snake in the Naga Cult of Kerala, a Southern Indian state. (Mohan October 2009)

None of the existing critical readings, however, has taken note of the roles of the riddle and the oath in a substantial manner. Given the formal and situational significance of these two micro-genres for a comprehensive, if complex reading of *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*, this paper identifies and addresses the need to analyze their presence in the respective plays with close attention. *Hayavadana* was Karnad's third play, and "one of the first modern Indian plays using traditional performance to receive national attention, and it established Karnad as one of India's most important modern playwrights." (Mee 5) What Mee observes of *Hayavadana* is equally true of *Naga-Mandala*, both plays use tradition in form as well as content by mixing folk tale with Indian story. He mobilizes and juxtaposes several different genres, each with its own inherent logic, its own textures, and its own perspective, so that the central story is reflected in various forms and commented on in many ways. (Mee 5) *Naga-Mandala*, the second play of concern to this paper, resembles *Hayavadana* in more ways than one. Most pertinently for the argument of this paper, both plays make a deliberated and creative use of what Mee calls the "logic" of "genres" like the oath (in the case of *Naga-Mandala*) and the riddle (in the case of *Hayavadana*) to further the politics of subversion in unexpected ways. (Mahadevan 23) The two plots of *Hayavadana* evolve around a riddle, which furthers the progression of events, and also plays a selfreflexive role in foregrounding itself as a micro-text or meta-text. Typically the function of a riddle is to provide an unequivocal solution to the question it poses but *Hayavadana* withholds such a solution. In *Naga-Mandala*, the oath concludes the inner frame or plot of the play, but not without making it problematic traditionally. In effect, the usual progress of the oath and the riddle towards closure is precluded by the plot and theme of both plays, so that, in a finely layered ironical movement, a counter-discourse comes to be generated as the

play unfolds. In what ways do the riddle and the oath play counter-intuitive roles within the structure of their respective plays? And thereby generate a shift in meaning from a domain of absoluteness to that of ambivalence? A two-way process is in fact set in motion by these micro-texts, whereby not only do they effect open-endedness in the plots of their respective plays, they also become open-ended themselves. ( Rao 86) In order to appreciate the structurally strategic location of these two microtexts, a brief synopsis of the plots of the two plays may be of help. The central story of *Hayavadana* revolves around Padmini, Devadatta, and Kapila as explained well in the earlier paragraphs. *Naga-Mandala* also has two plots that are linked in a meta-dramatic manner. The first or casing story in *Naga-Mandala* is the otherworldly story of light blazes amassing in the town sanctuary to trade talk. The second and inserted plot is the myth-saturated story of Rani, her significant other Appanna, and the King Cobra or Naga who turns into her darling by going up against the type of Appanna. In the focal plot of *Naga-Mandala* the hero Rani is hitched to Appanna, who secures her up his home, and visits her exclusive once per day for his early afternoon dinner. Rani languishes this savagery over an inconclusive timeframe, until one day Kurudavva, the visually impaired companion of her late relative, gives Rani two root-pieces which, when served to her significant other, would guarantee his undying dedication to her. Rani first tries the littler piece, yet when it has no impact on her oafish spouse, she cooks the bigger piece; in any case it turns a crimson shading, and she is startled into tossing it out of the house. The fluid falls on an ant colony dwelling place in which lives a ruler cobra (Naga, signifying "Snake"). Naga becomes hopelessly enamored with Rani, and after her better half leaves to his courtesan, he expects the type of Appanna and visits her around evening time. Startled at in the first place, Rani bit by bit starts to acknowledge her significant other's schizophrenic conduct, of being cruel to her at daytime, and cherishing during the evening. Things go to a pass when Rani winds up pregnant with Naga's tyke. Appanna is irritated at what he sees as his better half's treachery, and requests that she be conveyed to equity before the town older folks. Naga, meeting Rani around evening time for the last time, encourages her not to embrace the experience of the super hot iron yet to volunteer, rather, for the difficulty by the snake to demonstrate her blamelessness. For this Rani would need to hold the ruler cobra by hand and talk "reality." Only on the off chance that she talked reality, alerts Naga, would the cobra cease from gnawing her. If she somehow managed to absolute a lie even in obliviousness, the cobra would have no real option except to chomp her. Rani comes clean but then demonstrates her virtue, in the sharp determination that Karnad provides for the story. While reality of Rani's experience is that she had a sexual association with the cobra Naga, trusting him to be her significant other Appanna, the foundation of Rani's modesty relies upon her having the capacity to demonstrate that she had known no man sexually aside from her better half. At

the point when Rani guarantees of the cobra, she verbalizes her pledge so as to incorporate the cobra, who is Naga in the classification of men she has "touched." It is an enunciation that empowers her to express that she has known a man other than her significant other (the cobra as Naga) yet in order to propose to the onlookers that she is talking about touching the cobra in the demonstration of taking the vow consequently being loyal to the letter of the articulation "touch," as the vow would expect her to touch the cobra while putting forth her expression of modesty. Karnad's situating of the puzzle and the pledge, in vital hubs of the plot, mirrors his capacity to open spaces in what are, regularly, shut writings. Rani's pledge, approaching the finish of Naga-Mandala, increases the questions relating to the inquiry on which this plot turns: does Rani realize that Naga and Appanna are two unique men? A complete response to this inquiry is withheld likewise by giving a selection of endings, which thus undermines the desire that pledges be unequivocal.

### **Conclusion**

Human beings have unlimited desires and they want to fulfill them to appease the senses. Sometimes God helps or the fortune helps to get what someone wants but sometimes one has to pay a heavy price for anything coveted. *Hayavadana* and *Nagamandal* both the texts are talking about the faith of people in God and the intervention of God in the life of human beings. The traditions followed by the people by the name of God are really powerful and they influence the lives very much.

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