



# A Study Of Feminism In Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*

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**Abstract:** One of the most renowned Indian English dramatists is Girish Karnad (1938), despite the fact that his works were initially written in Kannada. He draws inspiration for his plays from Indian culture, mythology, and legend. He draws attention to the psychological intricacies and internal struggles of the human psyche in the actions of his characters. The characters of his works can be observed confronting the issues of their existence. At best, we can say that they often face a hard time when it comes about identifying the real purpose of their lives. However, individuals occasionally become victims of circumstances in an attempt to find solutions to their issues. In the crowd, they experience loneliness and alienation. The work "Hayavadana" tells the tale of the flawed Hayavadana, who is part horse and half man. It is a panorama of the female mind. Each character in the drama strives for fullness, perfection, and completion.

**Index Terms** – Existential, Legends, Myth, Folklore, Meaningfulness, Alienated

## I. INTRODUCTION

Girish Karnad (1938), while he initially works in Kannada, is considered as one of most esteemed Indian English dramatists. The narratives of his plays are driven by him from Indian mythologies, tales, and folklore. These narratives can be seen offered by him inside an existential framework, using a novel structure and fresh shades. The human mind seems to be illuminated by his designs. He emphasizes the internal tensions of the human psyche and the psychological complications in the behaviour of characters. Therefore, it can be observed that his characters strive to deal with their existential concerns. They effort, at best, to find significance in life. However, to address their issues, the individuals sometimes fall prey to circumstances. They experience alienation and solitude among the multitude. They definitely embody their perspective on life. It isn't possible for the human beings to exist in vacuum or in solitude. They are sociable beings. An individual must always engage in discourse with the external world. To attain completeness in life, one must comprehend the human mind and reveal the varied aspects of human nature. Feminism is defined by substantial political movements, diverse philosophies, and extensive social revolutions, all aimed at achieving parity between women's personal and political standing and that of males. The objective was not to completely replace the traditional male-dominated paradigm with a feminist one, rather the focus was made towards enabling women to establish their identity in society by securing their voting rights, participating in productive labour, obtaining education, achieving reproductive rights, and owning property. We may broadly define feminism as a collection of challenges against the oppression and marginalization of women. This article tries to reflect the inner turmoil and incompleteness of the protagonist, Padmini, in the play Hayavadana by Girish Karnad.

Hayavadana is a drama that illuminates the innermost being of Padmini, the protagonist. Girish Karnad has a strong urge to compose a play due to the multitude of thoughts occupying his head. This drama serves as an overview of the female mind. When analyzed through a feminist lens, the play displays a significant focus on women's struggles. It is a well-known fact that fullness, wholeness and perfection is sought by each character in the play. However, without the existence of women it is impossible to consider men, as well as society as a whole or ideal one. In that context, observant readers see that a woman is not born, but rather constructed; it is society that establishes norms and determines the role of women. These societal standards embrace her function and position within the community. Society restricts a woman's independence and agency, leaving her stuck among the four walls of the house. Devdatta and Kapila seem to let her to join them to the fair. However, that feeling of incompleteness inevitably brings tears to Padmini. Being a woman, her roles and internal flaws are understood by her. Therefore, she seeks a singular human embodiment of both mental power and physical strength.

The title "Hayavadana" implies that it narrates the tale of an incomplete Hayavadana, a being that is partly a man and partly a horse. He is neither a fully realized human nor a fully realized horse. Hayavadana narrates the story of his birth. He states that his mother was the princess of Karnataka. Her father arranged a Swayamvara for her to select her own husband.

“He cursed her to become a horse herself. So my mother became a horse and ran away happily. My father went back to his Heavenly Abode. Only the child of their marriage was left.” (Karnad: 1985:8)

The narrative is, indeed, deeply melancholic and also exhilarating. The narrative of Hayavadana's origin establishes the play's tone. The drama depicts the narrative of unfulfilled love between Padmini and her husband Devadatta, as well as between Padmini and her husband's close friend Kapila. Devadatta and Kapila reside in Dharmapura, a city governed by the famous Emperor King Dharamsheela. Devadatta is from a renowned Brahmin lineage. He is the only son of the renowned Brahmin Vidyasagara, recognized for his extensive knowledge in mystical texts. Devadatta is also known for his expertise in reasoning, love, and lyrical excellence. He "is as it were the apple of every eye in Dharmapura." (3) He has a close buddy named Kapila. Kapila is the son of the ironsmith Lohita, serving the king's armory like an axle serves a chariot wheel. He is a muscular person renowned for his physical prowess, dance abilities, and daring. The city's inhabitants took pride in their friendship. The world marvels at their friendship as they wander through the city streets. Individuals recall "Lava and Kusa, Rama and Lakshmana, Krishna and Balrama... One mind, one heart." (4)

Karnad now presents Padmini, the protagonist of the drama. He does not provide opportunity to her to appear on the stage directly but, on the other hand, he gives glance of her beauty which is printed on the sound mind of Devadatta. Devadatta is helpless to describe Padmini's beauty, yet, he tries to recollect those impressions which are remained in his deep inner consciousness and discloses the insight of his love towards Padmini before his friend Kapila:

“Devadatta (slowly): How can I describe her Kapila. Her forelocks rival the bees; her face is.....tanveer Shyama- the Shyama nayika-born of Kalidasa's magic description - as vatsyana had dreamt her. Kapila, in a single appearance, she has become my guru in the poetry of love.” (Karnad pg.18)

I hadn't thought anyone could be more beautiful than the wench Ragini who acts Rambha In our village troupe. But this one! You're right- she is Yakshini Shakuntala, Urvashi, Indumati-all rolled into one. (19) Devadatta experiences romantic infatuation. He cannot live without his beloved Padmini, whom he saw just once in the market. His desires are harmful to him. He is unable to focus on any task. Devadatta says to Kapila, "I know this girl is beyond my wildest dream. But still- I can't help wanting her- I can't help it. I swear, Kapila, with you as witness I swear, if I ever get her as my wife, I'll sacrifice my two arms to the goddess Kali, I'll sacrifice my head to Lord Rudra...."(Karnad pg.14)

Kapila was unable to manage his astonishment when Padmini inquired about his gaze; he could not answer properly. The conversation between Kapila and Padmini displays the heroine's excellent intellectual attributes. It elaborates on the exciting experiences of Padmini's life. Kapila is bound to confess, "I'm finished-decimated-powered to dust-powdered into tiny specks of flour to (to Padmini) "My mother, can I at least talk to a servant."(Karnad pg.23) In response, she wittily replies, "All right, my son! I opened the door. So consider me the door-keeper. What do you want?"(Karnad pg.25) Kapila evaluates all these events from a psychological perspective. His comprehension of human nature at his inherent conscious level disturbs him. He admits that Padmini is, "fast as lightning-and as sharp."(24) She is overflowing with ambitions. She has vitality in her life and demonstrates a strong determination to live. "She needs a man of steel."(Karnad pg.19) She is not suited for someone like Devadatta. However, Kapila elucidates all these emotions to his companion. The concealed facet of his consciousness is that he perceives himself as a man of steel, an appropriate match for her.

Despite the world's portrayal of ideal and cordial friendships, a thorough examination of these occurrences, particularly the emotions growing in Kapila's subconscious, uncovers the harsh reality that the foundation of their connection is fundamentally flawed. There are indications that the conflicts between the individual and society, or between existential thought and idealistic thought, are occurring secretly. The visit to the Ujjain fair signifies a voyage of a triangular connection of the three hearts. Padmini praises Kapila's cart-driving prowess and admires his physique:

"How he climbs like an ape.... And what an ethereal shape! Such a broad back like an ocean with muscles rippling across it and small, feminine waist which looks. so helpless".  
(Karnad pg.18)

All these praises represent the expression of hidden sensual urges that are oscillating inside Padmini's mind. These emotions indicate that none of the three are authentic in their relationships. Their connections, in any regard, are flawed. This is further shown by Devadatta's feelings of frustration. As Padmini's husband, he cannot tolerate the proximity between his wife and his friend Kapila; his fragile psyche cannot endure the weight of this emotional turmoil. This proximity is very normal amongst individuals of opposite sexes. So, there is no way to get out of this. Ultimately, he prays for strength as he says, 'Give me strengths, Lord Rudra My father, give me courage. I'm already trembling. I'd never thought I would be so afraid. Give me courage, Father strength me.' (87) He proceeds to the shrine of Goddess Mother Kali, seizes a sword, and beheads himself, demonstrating the narrow-mindedness of Padmini's husband, Devadatta. Upon their return, Kapila and Padmini see the absence of Devadatta. Kapila thinks about the entire situation and starts to look for his friend. He traces his footprints and arrives to the shrine of Mother Kali.

He discovers the beheaded body of Devadatta. Kapila's sharp intellect quickly understands the whole sequence of events that occurred. He feels guilt, and his conscious awareness signifies his responsibility. For him, there exists no alternative but murder, and he demonstrates his loyalty by declaring, "my brother, my father, my friend" (Karnad pg.77), before beheading himself. Padmini arrives and finds them dead. She acknowledges her responsibility as well. She believes that individuals would assert that both friends have engaged in a physical fight resulting in mutual fatalities over this "whore" (Karnad pg.80). The term "Whore" has considerable importance as it exposes the mentality of a male-dominated culture that lacks respect for women. She requests Goddess Kali for their lives. To her pleas, Goddess Kali bestows life to Devadatta and Kapila's, provided she reattaches their heads to their bodies and sticks the sword to their necks. Padmini adheres to directions; yet, in eagerness, she confuses the heads. The outcome is that Devadatta acquires Kapila's body and vice versa. Karnad presents a chance for Padmini's latent longing, concealed in her subconscious, to secretly emerge, seeking a remarkable intellect and powerful physique, embodied in a 'men of steel'. Goddess Kali also highlights her dishonesty in relationships via Savina. "My dear daughter there should be a limit even to honesty, Anyway-so be it".(Karnad pg.90) Karnad presents Padmini with an opportunity for choice, which she eagerly seizes, asserting her autonomy via the act of transferring heads to various bodies. This is a significant aspect of the feminist perspective.

A philosophical question has emerged, and it has been proven by a Rishi that, according to our holy scriptures, the head is superior. The head of Devadatta is designated as the proprietor of Padmini.

Kapila feels disheartened. Padmini, upon her departure, says to him, "It is my duty to go with Devadatta. But remember I'm going with your body. Let that cheer you up."(Karnad pg.37) The term 'body' used by Padmini distinctly illustrates the intricate nature of her thoughts.

Before doing the act of Sati, Padmini speaks about her son. However, the researcher believes it is impossible. Contemporary science rejects all of these biological hypotheses. The information about the kid offered by Padmini is insufficient, and Padmini's act as Sati is not fully realized in the truest meaning. She is neither the legitimate wife of Devadatta nor of Kapila. Consequently, she engages in Mock-Sati. Padmini commits Sati just to justify her deep emotional attachment. She is aware that it is an attempt to deceive the audience, since she has more self-awareness.

## II. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the play Hayavadana particularly illustrates the intrinsic reality of Padmini's existence, since the whole narrative revolves on her. The main characters sometimes cling to societal conventions while simultaneously seeking to listen to their inner voice. Padmini desires to become a Sati, which further illustrates her sense of incompleteness and her own feminist dilemmas. She is very aware that she does not embody a Sati in the authentic meaning of the term; rather, it serves as a manifestation of her innermost yearning. She seeks to ascertain the significance of her life by adhering to the conventions of her wealthy background. Her fight remains unresolved, indicating that she embodies a weaker protagonist within a feminist framework. It is said that philosophy is intended for life, rather than life being subordinate to philosophy. Philosophy enriches existence, however devoid of life, it lacks significance. Thus, Girish Karnad, via Padmini, aims to illustrate that a woman must advocate for herself.

## REFERENCES

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