

HAYAVADANA

By Girish Karnad

- ❑ History of Indian Theater
- ❑ About Girish Karnad
- ❑ Post-Independence Indian Theater and The contribution of Girish Karnad
- ❑ Use of Mythology to represent contemporary themes
- ❑ Mythological context of Hayavadana

Girish Karnad In Short(19 May 1938 – 10 June 2019)

- **BIRTH**

- Girish Karnad was born in 1938 in Karnataka.
- born to a Brahmin family .
- A native Kannada speaker but learnt English and other languages
- Karnad was exposed to travelling theatre groups and natak mandalis (theatre troupes)
- he was an ardent admirer of Yakshagana and the theater in his village

- **EDUCATION**

- Karnad's initial schooling was in Marathi
- TOOK Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics and statistics from Karnatak Arts College,
- after graduate in 1958,he travelled to England and studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford
- Karnad was elected the President of the Oxford Union in 1962–63

Continue...

- **CAREER**

- 1963–70 worked for the Oxford University Press, Chennai, for seven yrs. Left job.
- he got involved with local amateur theatre group, The Madras Players.
- began to write full time for both theatre and film.
- 1987–88, he was at the University of Chicago as visiting professor and Fulbright playwright-in-residence
- 1974–1975 ,He served as director of the Film and Television Institute of India
- 1988–93 chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the national academy of the performing arts
- he continued to write plays for about forty years , often using history and mythology to address contemporary themes
- He was active in the world of Indian cinema working as an actor, director and screenwriter.

Important Works

- His plays, written in Kannada, have been translated into English (mostly translated by himself) and some Indian languages
- When Karnad started writing plays, Kannada literature was highly influenced by the renaissance in Western literature
- Kanrad Begun to write plays **keeping Indian Tradition and mingling western thoughts and Techniques.**
- In 1961 wrote his first play '*Yayati*'
- In 1964 *Tughlaq*
- In 1971 *Hayavadana*, was his third play.
- In 1988 *Naga Mandala*.
- *Agni Mattu Male (The Fire and the Rain)*
- He has also significant contribution towards Indian movies.
- He provided the voice of A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India, in the audiobook of Kalam's autobiography by Charkha Audiobooks, Wings of Fire.

Themes

- Karnad found a new approach of drawing historical and mythological sources to tackle contemporary themes and existentialist crisis of modern man through characters locked in psychological and philosophical conflicts.
- In Yayati, It ridicules the ironies of life through characters in *Mahabharata*.
- His next was Tughlaq (1964), about a **rashly idealist** 14th-century Sultan of Delhi, Muhammad bin Tughluq, and **allegory on the Nehruvian era** which started with **ambitious idealism** and ended up in disillusionment.
- In Hayavadana, existential crisis.
- *Naga-Mandala* (Play with Cobra, 1988) was based on a folk tale narrated by a woman, a feminist play which not only exposes male chauvinism, the oppression of women, the great injustice done to them by men and the patriarchal culture, but also stealthily deflates the concept of chastity. It is recognised as a most creative work of the time.

Hayavadana and the Indian Theater

- Hayavadana, written in 1971, was his third play
- The play is based on Kathasaritsagara("Ocean of the Streams of Stories“, is a famous 11th-century collection of Indian legends, fairy tales and folk tales as retold in Sanskrit) by a Somadeva and the further development of this story by Thomas Mann.
- Hayavadana (1971) was based on a theme drawn from The Transposed Heads, a 1940 novella by Thomas Mann, which is originally found in the 11th-century Sanskrit text Kathasaritsagara.
- Herein he **employed the folk theatre form of Yakshagana**(Its stories are drawn from Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata and other epics from both Hindu and Jain and other ancient Indic traditions)
- Hayavadana was one of the first modern plays to employ traditional theater techniques.

The Story

- a simple love triangle ends in a comedic and confusing twist of fate in Karnad's HAYAVADANA. Devadatta and his beautiful wife Padmini find themselves traveling with their faithful friend Kapila. The suspicious husband, convinced of his wife's love for Kapila, beheads himself. The distraught friend, upon learning of Devadatta's deed, takes his own head as well. Only the goddess Kali can remedy the situation and bring the men back from the dead-but just who's head is on who's body?

- Devdatta

Padmini

Kapila

Goddess Kali

Plot :

Setting: Dharmapura

Summary

- The play opens with a puja to Ganesha, as the Bhagavata asks that Ganesha bless the performance that he and the company are about to put on. Then he places the audience in the setting of the play, Dharmapura, and begins to introduce the central characters. The first is Devadatta, the son of a Brahmin who outshines the other pundits and poets of the kingdom. The second is Kapila, the son of the iron-smith who is skilled at physical feats of strength. The two are the closest of friends.
- As the Bhagavata sets up the story, there is a scream of terror offstage. An actor runs onstage screaming that he has seen a creature with a horse's head, a man's body, and the voice of a human. The Bhagavata doesn't believe him, and even when the creature (Hayavadana) enters, the Bhagavata thinks it is a mask and attempts to pull off Hayavadana's head. Upon realizing it's his real head, the Bhagavata listens as Hayavadana explains his origin: ##he is the son of a princess and a celestial being in horse form, and he is desperate to become a full man. The Bhagavata suggests he go to the temple of Kali, as she grants anything anyone asks for. Hayavadana sets out for the temple, hopeful that Kali will be able to change his head to a human head.

Summery...(How Hayavadana got his horse head?)

- Hayavadana tells: His mother, a Karnataka princess, was very beautiful in her youth and before her marriage her father arranged for Swambar Sabha but kept aside all the princes of the world of Swambar she chose the White Stallion of Prince of Arabia & married Him. But later Mother found, it was a Celestial body Gandharva cursed by god Kuvera, turned to its original form after spent 15 years with human love. After that the mother refuses to go with Gandharva to his heavenly abode unless he become a horse again , so she was cursed and become a horse.
- Hayavadana is only child of their parents and became a horse too.
- Bhagabata tells Hayavadana about to try Goddess Kali of Mount Chitrakoot. He goes off

Continue..

- Recovering from the interruption, the Bhagavata returns to the play. He begins to sing, explaining that the two heroes fell in love with a girl and forgot themselves. Meanwhile, a female chorus sings in the background about the nature of love. Devadatta and Kapila enter. Devadatta explains his love for Padmini, explaining that he would sacrifice his arms and his head if he could marry her. Kapila at first makes fun of Devadatta but then sees how much his friend is affected by Padmini. He agrees to find out her name and where she lives.
- Kapila goes to the street where Padmini lives and begins to knock on the doors. When Padmini opens the door to her home, Kapila is immediately love-struck. Padmini asks him what he wants, outwitting him as he tries to come up with reasons why he is there. He eventually explains that he is there to woo her for Devadatta. Kapila says to himself that Padmini really needs a man of steel, and that Devadatta is too sensitive for someone as quick as Padmini.

Continue...

- The Bhagavata reveals that Devadatta and Padmini were quickly married, and that all three remained friends. The story then jumps forward six months, when Padmini is pregnant with a son, and the three friends are meant to go on a trip to Ujjain together. Devadatta expresses jealousy that Padmini seems to have some affection for Kapila, which Padmini denies. She says that she will cancel the trip so that the two of them can spend more time together, but when Kapila arrives, ready to leave, Padmini changes her mind and decides to go, much to Devadatta's dismay.
- As the three of them travel together, Padmini remarks how well Kapila drives the cart. She points out a tree with the Fortunate Lady's flower, and Kapila rushes off to grab flowers for her. Padmini remarks to herself how muscular Kapila is, and Devadatta sees Padmini watching him with desire. When they pass the temple of Rudra and Kali, Devadatta is reminded of his old promise and sneaks away to cut off his head. Kapila goes to look for him, and upon discovering Devadatta's headless body is struck with grief. He decides to cut off his head as well.

Continue...

- Padmini begins to get worried about the two men and goes after them. She sees their two headless bodies on the ground and attempts to commit suicide as well. The goddess Kali stops her and tells her she will revive the men if Padmini replaces their heads on their bodies. Padmini, in her excitement, accidentally switches the two heads when she replaces them. The two men are revived: one with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body, and the other with Kapila's head and Devadatta's body.
- At first, the three of them are amused by the mix-up, but when they try to return home, they discover issues. Each man believes that Padmini is his wife. Devadatta's head claims that the head rules the body, and so she is his wife. Kapila's head argues that his hand accepted hers at the wedding ceremony, and that the child she is carrying came from his body. Padmini is aghast, but decides to go with Devadatta's head. Kapila does not return with them.

Continue...


- As the second act opens, Padmini and Devadatta are happier than they've ever been. She loves his newfound strength, and the two of them prepare for their child. They buy two dolls for their son. The dolls speak to the audience and reveal that over time, Devadatta's new, strong body begins to revert to its old form. He and Padmini fight over how to treat their son, as she believes that Devadatta coddles him. The dolls tell the audience that Padmini begins to dream of Kapila. When the dolls begin to show signs of wear, Padmini asks Devadatta to get new ones and goes to show her son the forest.
- As Padmini travels through the woods, she discovers Kapila living there. He has regained his strength, just as Devadatta has lost his. He explains how he had to war against his body, and how he has come to accept that he is, in fact, Kapila. Padmini implies that she is attracted to him, and spends several nights with him.


Continue...

- Devadatta returns with the dolls and tries to find Padmini in the woods. He discovers her with Kapila, and the two decide to kill each other to put an end to the struggle between their heads and their bodies. After they have killed each other, Padmini decides to perform sati, throwing herself on their funeral pyre. The Bhagavata explains that Padmini was, in her own way, a devoted wife.
- Just as the audience believes the play has ended, a second actor comes onstage saying that there was a horse walking down the street singing the national anthem. The first actor also enters, with a young boy in tow. The boy is very serious, and does not speak, laugh, or cry. It is revealed the child is Padmini's son.

Summery

- At that point, Hayavadana returns. He explains that he had asked Kali to make him complete, but instead of making him a complete human, she has made him a complete horse. Padmini's son begins to laugh at Hayavadana, and the two sing together. Hayavadana still wishes to rid himself of his human voice, and the boy encourages him to laugh. As Hayavadana laughs more and more, his laughter turns into a horse's neigh, and he thus becomes a complete horse.
- The Bhagavata concludes the story by marveling at the mercy of Ganesha, who has fulfilled the desires of Hayavadana and the young boy. He says that it is time to pray, and Padmini, Devadatta, and Kapila join in thanking the Lord for ensuring the completion and success of the play.

- 
- HAYAVADANA is situated in the interstices of an invigorating legacy of traditional Indian folk and modern Western theatre," says Chatterjee. Girish Karnad cleverly binds an 11th century Indian fable with Thomas Mann's 20th century *The Transposed Heads*. At the heart of the story is a confusing philosophical question-if two heads switch bodies, just who becomes who?-but HAYAVADANA is layered with more.
 - A love triangle, a snide goddess, a pair of living dolls, a man with a horse's ,is a truly unique theatrical experience

- 
- "The answer given in the Kathasaritsagara is: since the head represents the man, the person with the husband's head is the husband.
 - "Mann brings his relentless logic to bear upon this solution. If the head is the determining limb, then the body should change to fit the head. At the end of Mann's version, the bodies have changed again and adjusted to the heads so perfectly that the men are physically exactly as they were at the beginning. We are back to square one; the problem remains unsolved.

Influenced from

- **The Transposed Heads**, a novella by **Thomas Mann** (was a German novelist) It was written in 1940.
- It is one of Mann's novellas Set in India, the story is a popular retelling of an ancient folk legend.

Influenced from

- **Charles Aymard Sartre**, a French philosopher, playwright, one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology,
- **Jean Anouilh's** [ʒɑ̃ anuj] **Antigone**(1944) , a French dramatist also presents arguments founded on **existentialist ideas**. It is a tragedy inspired by Greek mythology and the play of the same name (Antigone, by Sophocles) from the 5th century BC
- Martin Heidegger, German philosopher
- **Eugene O'Neill**, an American playwright, **Nearly all of his other plays involve some degree of tragedy and personal pessimism.**

Related Theories

- **Existentialism**— **Despair**(loss of hope), **existential crisis**("if one day I will be forgotten, what is the point of all of my work?")
- **Facticity**
- **The absurd**: there is no meaning in the world beyond what meaning we give it , life becomes absurd due to the incompatibility between human beings and the world they inhabit
- **Existence precedes essence**:- that they are individuals—independently acting and responsible, conscious beings ("existence")—rather than what labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived categories the individuals fit ("essence").
- **Cultural amnesia**:- Culture is the way we do things around here.
- **Cultural amnesia**, then, would be revealed in a widespread ignorance of what used to be important but has now fallen into desuetude