

## Indian Woman and her Sexuality: An Investigation Through Heterogeneous Application of Symbolic Masks in Girish Karnad's Hayavadana

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Abstract

*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. I, here, focus on the objectives, techniques and types of mask usage in terms of disguise and revelation at the physical, emotional and psychological levels. The paper further highlights the power that the characters enjoy over other characters by using specific masks. By highlighting the theme of incompleteness in the play, the playwright seems to question Hindu religious and traditional values. The veiled wants of the characters are also shown to the readers in this article through a variety of subtle techniques. Qualitative approach has been adopted as methodology where the interpretive method of inquiry has been employed to explore the hidden meanings within the text.*

**Key Words:** Disguise, Incompleteness, Mask, Revelation, Theatre, Tradition

### Introduction

The paper explores how Girish Karnad uses different masks for male and female characters in the play *Hayavadana* (1971). Almost all the major characters are provided with specific masks and these become a tool of revealing either the power or weakness for the characters. They also reveal their personal emotions to the audience, which are otherwise difficult to disclose. The paper highlights that a single mask used in the play does not perform single purpose but is utilized for a variety of purposes. Whereas, some masks are used for disguise, others are used for revelation. All the key characters in the play wear masks to convey their emotional and psychological conflict to the audience and other characters present on the stage. The article analyses how Karnad engages symbolic masks as a dramatic technique to know social relationships, modern Indian woman's eternal longing for perfection, and her sexuality in *Hayavadana*.

Karnad who is a Kannada playwright brings out some of the myths and legends to the contemporary reality with some absurd actions in the drama. He expresses his thoughts and emotions in the mode of exasperation and depiction of psychology. He has the great ability to bring out the power of endurance into life. Karnad is considered as one of the notable playwrights in India, a bilingual writer who mainly writes in Kannada and translates his own work into English. He was born in 1938 and was culturally associated with both Maharashtra and Karnataka through personal history and through his work in film and theater. He is a playwright, a filmmaker, an actor, a writer and an activist and he had been at the center of some of the most important cultural and artistic movements and events of the last four decades in India. Among his countless and wide-ranging accomplishments are his time at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar (1960-63), numerous awards over the years for best film, best actor, best screen play, and in recent years, best feature film in Kannada for *Kanooru Heggadthi* (2000), the top national honours for his contributions to the arts and to literature (Padma Shri in 1974 and the Padma Bhushan in 1992) and the country's supreme literary award (Jnanpith award in 1998). Latest honours include being selected as World Theatre Ambassador by the International Theatre Institute of UNESCO in 2008 and an honorary doctorate by University of Southern California in 2011.

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## Theoretical Framework

The symbols are imagined to be appreciated both because of the experience they convey (Lampel et al. 2000) and for their understanding empowers individuals to emblematically view themselves in a structure of social relationships (Aspers 2009; Bourdieu 1984; DiMaggio 1987). We see Hayavadana, “The man with the horse’s head” as one of the several symbols of incompleteness, which is a running theme in the play. Kali, the goddess that symbolizes the devastation of evil in the Indian society, normally represented in an enraged and ruthless form; in the play, nevertheless, is half-asleep and merely partly attendant to her devotees’ lives. Karnad’s practice of Indian expressions and symbolism warrants discussion in this situation. They emphasise the dramaturgical influence. In the tradition of ancient Sanskrit poetry, metaphors support romantic hyperbole. Accordingly Karnad ties up the loose ends of the story with symbols. For the current analysis, being literary in substance, ‘Symbolism’ is used as a conceptual framework as the whole argument sets around how symbols deliver gendered connotation.

## Aims and Objectives of the Research Work

The present literary research work aims to study Karnad’s use of symbolic masks and some worthwhile technical characteristics of his writing. It will broaden the mind and sharpen the critical insight as far as the use of his dramaturgical techniques are concerned. The following aims and objectives are kept in mind for research:

1. To form an inclusive awareness of Karnad’s use of symbolic masks.
2. To refer to the theme of Karnad’s selected play in the light of the title of the present research.
3. To concentrate on the contemporary applicability of *Hayavadana*.
4. To understand the major and minor characters in the selected play.
5. To recognize the interrelationships between different characters of the play under close study.

## Significance of the Research

The present research work would be ascertained suitable and appropriate as it would throw further light upon distinctive characteristics of the plot of Karnad’s play to arouse burning questions considering marital relationship and gender specific expectations especially regarding female sexuality that are dominant in the existing Indian perspective. The analysis of Karnad’s narratives of myth, history, and folklore through the use of symbolic mask will throw light on the advances made by him and their relative worth. It will be an unswerving documentation of Karnad’s play marking an outlet in an innovative direction and the development of a different practice apposite to his Twelfth-century folktale that he retells in *Hayavadana*. The analysis will provide the researchers with the comprehensive argument on the development of characterization through employment of heterogeneous symbolic masks. A multidimensional vision will be engaged to fathom the issues raised by the author with the support of the discussions, analyses, and counter-views by several critics and scholars, and it will be equally valuable to the scholars, readers, and researchers.

## Hypothesis

The present research work intends to study Karnad’s use of symbolic masks. So far, no comprehensive and widespread work is done in this area. Following are some of the key topics of the hypothesis for the present research work:

1. Karnad’s play effectually intertwines the existing situation in its structure.
2. Present socio-political and cultural concerns are staged through the use of symbolic masks.
3. Karnad also takes central problems of caste, heredity, and gender and weaves them into the texture of his play.
4. Karnad’s approach towards characterization has considerably swayed and funded the modern Indian theatre.

## Research Methodology

Qualitative approach has been adopted as methodology where the interpretive methods of inquiry like close reading and stylistic analysis have been employed to explore the hidden meanings within the text. After reading the text of Karnad's *Hayavadana*, I came across the theatrical production available on YouTube directed by Prabha Mandayam and Mayank Bakshi at the OASIS (Organization of Associated Students from the Indian Subcontinent) Annual Culture Show in 2008. The performance of 44 minutes and 40 seconds was uploaded on YouTube on 7 September 2012 (Mandayam n. page). The prime source was read a couple of times in order to acquire an enhanced precision of the issue. Research documents, blogs, and journals were considered as well as collected to guide over the central characteristics of the play.

## Data Collection

The data needed for the present research work has been collected in two ways; the primary data was collected and used broadly from *Hayavadana* (1971). The secondary data was collected from the critical books, journals, articles, interviews, critical essays, web material, newspapers, and different reports published on Karnad and his selected play.

*Hayavadana* (1971) is a play created upon ancient and modern sources—the ancient Sanskrit *Kathasaritsagara* and the novella of the 20th century novelist, Thomas Mann is in the narrative as well as is in modern Western theatrical traditions and indigenous folk theater from India. It is a story about two men in love with one woman and through this archetypal tale of love, Karnad raises philosophical questions about human identity and social questions about women's desires and societal restrictions. Exhilarating, amusing, dramatic, rebellious, this play showcases a collection of theatrical devices and embeds a tragedy of unsatisfied desires in a comedy of social and political incompleteness.

Amongst the Greek plays, one performer used multiple masks for multiple characters and roles, but in the play *Hayavadana* (1971), we find Karnad employing it for a different function: multiple performers in the play use multiple masks and each mask expresses different emotions. We, therefore, find a variety of masks in the play. Karnad transcends the traditional usage of masks by using them for creating sound effects and controlling the brightness and dimness of light. Hence a single mask, used by the character in the play, presents numerous ideas to different performers on stage as well as to the audience. The mask of horse's head worn by the character Hayavadana appears scary for the Actor 1, for the audience this mask shows the presence of a strange being on stage, for the child of Padmini this mask becomes hilarious but for the character Hayavadana, this is no more a mask and is revealed to the audience as his original self.

Apart from the masks used with the costumes of the characters, certain other objects and figures are used to reveal the inner and hidden characteristics of the human beings. Animals, birds and insects figure in all the plays hinting at the inhuman aspect of human beings. For example, in the play *Hayavadana* (1971), Karnad has given the imagery of snake, mouse, elephant, horse, cockroach and spiders. Where snake and mouse refer to the conflict in the play between perfection and imperfection, the cockroach and the spider hint at the disgusting and the dirty character of Padmini. Half-curtains are employed to introduce Hayavadana to the audience. This character Hayavadana has a man's body and a horse's head. Mistaking his head for a mask, Bhagavata, with the help of the Actor, tries to take it off. The audience experiences a multi-purpose show, achieved by this single mask. Karnad presents in his play that what is conceived as a mere mask of the character is in reality his true self. Therefore, Hayavadana discloses this reality to the characters and the audience and requests Bhagavata to help him in becoming a complete man again.

## Dolls

As Padmini is the only female protagonist in the play *Hayavadana* (1971), therefore, Karnad has utilised the dolls to give voice to the very private feelings of Padmini. These dolls become the mask of Padmini because it is through them we are informed of the desires and longings which otherwise would not be revealed. The two dolls brought by Devadatta from the Ujjain fairly converse with each other but they are silent to the other characters. They are pleased that a rich human who has a worthy house acquires them. However, after Padmini gives birth to a son

They feel repulsed in the presence of the weepy child. They also see the transformation in Devadatta's body. First his hands were so 'rough' (Karnad, 1994) and now they are like a 'young girl's' (Karnad, 1994). These dolls also gossip of the pregnancy of Padmini, then about her son and the family atmosphere in a somber and non-serious manner. The description of the interior of the house in terms of a mouse, a cockroach and spiders are also referred to these otherwise assumed silent dolls. With this disgusting representation of the interior of the house, the dolls refer to the impure soul of Padmini. She is a married woman who is having hidden thoughts, feelings and desires for a man other than her husband. The abstract emotions are given substance by the utilization of these dolls. They see the man, she is singing about and is dreaming of, who has 'a nice body—looks soft' (Karnad, 1994). Narrating what they saw in Padmini's dreams, they indulge in an argument, and then fight, scratch and hit each other. This tussle is between the 'morally acceptable' on one side and the 'desirable unacceptable' on the other.

For the presentation of different moods of a female character on the stage in a Greek performance, the colour and the length of the hair on the mask were varied. It is through these changes in the mask that the age and expression of the female performer was revealed to the audience. The expression thus appeared on the mask remained the same throughout the performance. But in *Hayavadana* (1971), dolls are used for 'Padmini' to inform and comment on her psychological state that cannot be printed on the mask because the emotions and feelings of Padmini keep changing throughout the performance. Therefore, it is through the discussion and debate of the dolls that exposes the variety in the feelings of Padmini.

These dolls are not only the inner self of Padmini but also appear to be the chorus of the play, because they comment on Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini—the three major characters of the play. Then they indulge in arguing, fighting, biting, scratching and hitting each other. Holding a sword in one hand and in the other two dolls made of cloth; Devadatta enters the forest in search of his wife. Just like the dolls were given importance for the revelation of the inner self of Padmini, they are further handed over to the son as an inheritance. Actor 1 appears with a boy of about five who is holding two dolls made of cloth.

For the presentation of the female character on the stage, it has been observed that the length of the hair and its colour was varied in the mask. However, in *Hayavadana* (1971), dolls are used for 'Padmini' to inform and comment on her psychological state. The dolls, therefore, become a talking mask on the stage who reveal the otherwise hidden feelings of Padmini. Like Bhagavata, the role performed by the dolls becomes imperative. Bitty and half-complete sentences spoken by them are complete and meaningful. The lullaby sung by Padmini to her son referring to a rider, riding a white mare, reminds us of the stallion that was selected by the mother of Hayavadana as her spouse. The dolls, hence, become structurally important for the play because they combine the two stories i.e. one of Kapila, Devadatta, and Padmini and the other of Hayavadana together. These dolls expose the hidden desires of Padmini which she nurtures for Kapila and on the other hand they are observed with the child of Padmini when this child meets Hayavadana. This employment of Dolls is also a unique device to inform the audience of what is happening in the minds of the characters. The Dolls inform us that the person Padmini is thinking of is not Devadatta. Though Padmini asserts that she has forgotten Kapila, yet in her heart of hearts, she cannot forget him. Rather, he is the prince of her dreams. The Dolls converse about how he climbs a tree and then dives into the river by saying:

DOLL 1. He goes to her...

DOLL 2. ...very near her...

DOLL1. (*In a whisper.*) What's he going to do now?

DOLL2. (*Even more anxious.*) What? (*They watch.*)

DOLL 1. (*Baffled.*) But he's climbing a tree!

DOLL 2. (*Almost a wail of disappointment.*)

He's dived into a river! (Karnad, 1994)

This conversation between the dolls signifies their physical union in dream. Their incomplete sentences divulge central desires of Padmini, which they find difficult to depict in words. The abusive speech they utilize for Padmini and Devadatta presents the idea of absurdity and alienation in the play.

Where Karnad uses physical masks for the head swapping of the male characters, he also exposes the desires of Padmini to the audience. As soon as Padmini overcomes her love for her-created husband—the one with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body—she starts missing Kapila and begins to dream about him. To interpret

Padmini's dreams, Karnad has utilized dolls as masks. To present the character of Padmini as a split personality, there is a split shown by the dolls as Doll 1 and Doll 2. These dolls are also clad in such a manner that it is tough to interpret their sex. This becomes important for the understanding of the audience because the dolls represent the conscience of Padmini and the conscience has no gender that is presented through the following dialogues:

Doll 1. Is that little Satan asleep yet?

Doll 2. Think so. God! It's killing me.

Doll 1. ...crying all day.

Doll 2. Making a mess every fifteen minutes (Karnad 2.114)

And at another place:

Doll 1. His palms! They were 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](#))

The employment of a pair of living dolls as a mask for Padmini and a man with a horse's head present unique theatrical devices contrary to the traditional usage of masks on the stage. It is Padmini who does not like the softness of her new husband's hands because they lack sexual appeal. The dolls speak of Padmini's feelings when she touches Devadatta and shudders apprehending the deed that he has changed into his original shape. The difference turns out to be further noticeable as they start quarrelling with each other. This squabble between the dolls over the presence of an unknown person in Padmini's dream highlights that Padmini is taking pleasure in coaxing an ideal partner in her imaginative lullaby. She tries to hide her private emotions from her husband and coaxes Devadatta into thinking that she does not care about Kapila any longer. But the hidden emotions of Padmini are disclosed to the audience through the presence of these dolls on the stage. As soon as Padmini closes her eyes, the dolls start to gossip of the visitor in her dreams. A schizoid individual does things in privacy and the tatty dolls present this. Besides, with the dolls is connected a wisdom of sincere modesty (or what may be termed as the integrity opinion) and she has to abandon them before she leaves for Kapila. The Dolls do not approve of this act of Padmini and give vent to their feelings as follows:

Doll 1. The whore

Doll 2. The bitch ([Karnad, 1994](#))

## Stage Setting

The setting of the stage plays a substantial role as in the absence of any other option left for the character revelation; this setting is utilized as a mask for various emotions and feelings. The action shifts from the city of Dharmapura to the temple of Kali and then to the hut of Kapila in the forest. This is important that living in the city Padmini controls her passions but in the forest she liberates her suppressed self, first on the Ujjain trip and also when she meets Kapila in his hut. The role of ambience on a person's character unravels. Living in the city with her husband, Padmini waits for the arrival of Kapila but does not disclose it to Devadatta and it is through her dialogue and her gesture of restlessness that her desire is revealed to the audience when she says in Act 1:

PADMINI. Why is he so late? He should have been here more than an hour ago...

(*Looks out of a window.*) ([Karnad, 1994](#))

In Act 2, when Padmini meets Kapila in his hut in the forest, she gives voice to her emotions and openly pleads before Kapila in the following way:

PADMINI. ...But at least until my child wakes up, may I sit here and look at you? Have my fill for the rest of my life? I won't speak a word. (*Long pause.*) ([Karnad, 1994](#))

Karnad has utilized different kinds of masks in his play *Hayavadana* (1971) for the presentation of different characters. For the male gender, the physical masks are used which are worn by these characters but for Padmini, the dolls and the Female Chorus become a kind of an emotional and psychological mask. These masks perform different tasks assigned to them. For example, the placing of head on the wrong body is deliberately made on stage so that the longing of the female protagonist is made known to the audience. This could only be possible by the help of the masks. When Padmini mixes up the two heads in the temple, her curbed longing for a complete man gets articulated. The act does not complete at this point but Padmini makes sure that she remains with her own created ideal husband for the rest of her life. It reveals another bitter reality of life that ideals do not exist. Failing to put up with the changed Devadatta who has left going to gymnasium and has again started concentrating

In reading and writing, one day Padmini sends him away to Ujjain fair on the ploy of getting new dolls for her son. The loss of Devadatta's virility and manly smell starts reminding Padmini of Kapila again. She muses: 'What could he be doing now? Where could he be? Could his body be fair still, and his face dark?' (Karnad 119) She tells Devadatta that the old and tattered dolls are signs of ill luck, and thus she sends him to Ujjain only to find an opportunity to meet Kapila again. In the play *Hayavadana* (1971), Karnad emphasizes on the human condition affected by the metaphysical intervention and by the limitations of human body.

The single mask worn by Devadatta and Kapila in the play has diversified meanings for the characters present on stage and the audience witnessing it. In Act 2, seeing each other with a new combination of head and body, Kapila and Devadatta laugh aloud, but Padmini runs away in confusion.

The conversation between Bhagavata and Kapila in Act 2 shows how Kapila is reduced into an epitome of alienation. To represent the alienated position of Kapila, Karnad has used physical action of the character pronounced rather than the dialogue. This physical activity of Kapila apparently shows that he is attempting to conceal his feelings from the others but this physical gesture performs the role of a mask. This mask gives vent to Kapila's emotions of hatred for his friend Devadatta and frustration at the loss of Padmini. We see him axing and felling a tree in a mime (a folk device used in the play) symbolizing his frustration in life. It presents that he has no charm in life. The very act of cutting a tree tells the audience what the words cannot convey. Kapila tries to hide his own self behind the mask of silence and portraying as if he is busy in life but the very expression becomes active for the conveyance of his disappointment in life. This physical activity of Kapila becomes an emotional mask for the revelation of this character which is presented in the stage directions as follows:

*(Kapila goes round the stage once. He mimes picking up an axe and felling a tree. A long silence. Only the soundless image of Kapila cutting the tree. ... Kapila doesn't see her (Padmini) for a while and when he does stands paralysed. A long silence.)* (Karnad, 1994)

From the very beginning of the play, it is presented that none of the main characters i.e. Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini likes to offend the other with a clear affirmation or negative answer. This ambiguity in their behaviour introduces complexity in their relationships. Kapila, at no cost, wants to make his feelings public, as he knows well that it will result in the confrontation between the two friends. He too likes to keep the two relationships: friendship with Devadatta and liking for Padmini. The elementary paradox in the play is that all the characters are leading a double-life until it is too late to merge their two selves: they risk not to

Declare openly what they feel at heart.

Both Devadatta and Padmini portray themselves as what they are not. Padmini poses to be in love with her husband, which she is not. She loves Kapila but will not let her husband know it, which leads to their tragedy. She goes to meet Kapila in the forest without informing him, keeping the mask of hypocrisy intact. Kapila too wears the same mask. He wants to marry Padmini but without hurting Devadatta. His real self, overpowers his formal outer self when he succumbs to the offer of Padmini twice. But he tries hard to sustain this hypocrisy until Devadatta in the forest catches him with Padmini.

The study of the character of Devadatta shows that the mysterious forces and drives in his mental structure and his unconscious mind are always aware of the serious charm between his wife and his best friend Kapila. Devadatta tries to revoke the Ujjain trip with Kapila for he does not desire Padmini to be drooling over Kapila the whole day: 'twittering, Kapila, Kapila, every minute' (Karnad, 1994). Devadatta, on finding the first suitable opportunity, sensing imminent psychological defeat, goes up to the Kali temple [the other two have gone to the Rudra temple] but instead of offering his arms, as he had earlier promised if he won over Padmini, cuts off his head as an offering to the goddess. When Padmini and Kapila return, Kapila goes to look for Devadatta, finds his headless body and in anguish, after giving a long speech full of protestations of love and devotion for 'my brother, my father, my friend...' (Karnad, 1994) and commenting that Devadatta had 'spurned' (Karnad, 1994) him in this world, cuts off his head. It may seem at first that it is all a genuine reaction to a very dear friend's death but goddess Kali gives the real reason as follows:

KALI. The rascals! They were lying to their last breaths. That fellow Devadatta—he had once promised his head to Rudra and his arms to me! Think of it—head to him and arms to me! Then because you insisted on going to the Rudra temple, he comes here and offers his head. Nobly too—wants to keep his word, he says—no other reason! Then this Kapila, died right in front of me—but 'for his friend'. Mind you! Didn't even have the courtesy

To refer to me. And what lies! Says he is dying for friendship. He must have known perfectly well he would be accused of killing Devadatta for you. Do you think he wouldn't have grabbed you if it hadn't been for that fear? But till his last breath,—‘Oh my friend! My dear brother!’ (Karnad, 1994)

What the two friends kept secret from the audience and from one another throughout the play is revealed to the audience through the goddess Kali. Therefore, there are multiple masks along with the innovative theatrical techniques used by Karnad that present layers of masks in the play.

The masks used by Karnad in *Hayavadana* (1971) are not only used for physical appearance but they are also utilized as Psychological masks which are not physically worn by the performer and are not visible to the audience but convey the hidden thoughts and emotions. Initially, Devadatta feels like a wrestler as he has the body of Kapila. He defeats a victor in the gymnasium in a sword-fight. But soon he returns to his old real self, i.e. strong head with weak body.

The stage-directions show the psychological state of the characters and this is made possible only by the usage of mask. Hayavadana from its first entrance on stage the is presented as a psychologically disturbed figure as the stage directions show:

The curtain is lowered a little more - just enough to show the head again. Again it ducks. Again the curtain is lowered. This goes on till the curtain is lowered right down to the floor. Hayavadana, who has a man's body but a horse's head, is sitting on the floor hiding his head between his knees. (Karnad, 1994)

This very act of Hayavadana hiding his head between his knees is revealed through the use of curtains and the mask of a horse's head. The performance of hiding the appearance of his self from the others presents that he is not satisfied with his present existence and wants to change it with something perfect. It is this behaviour of the character that shows his concern for becoming a complete being. The complex pattern of human relationship is made possible on the stage with the technique of mask swapping. Padmini fixes the heads of her husband Devadatta and his friend Kapila on wrong bodies i.e. Devadatta's head on Kapila's body and vice versa. Padmini always admired the mind of Devadatta and desired the strong body of Kapila. By setting the wrong head on the wrong body, Padmini achieves the perfect combination that she always longed for in her dreams. This way Padmini enjoys the relationship with the new husband, she herself being the creator. Padmini gives vent to her emotions by saying:

PADMINI. My celestial-bodied  
Gandharva... My sun-faced Indra

.....

PADMINI. What a wide chest. What  
Other canopy do I need? (Karnad, 1994)

The basic irony in the play is that all the characters are leading a double life until it is time to merge their two selves: they dare not confess frankly what they feel in their hearts. Devadatta in Act 1 of the play *Hayavadana* (1971) does not approve of the intimacy between his wife and his friend and wants to discourage their relationship but he does not express it openly to either of them. In an indirect way he articulates his fears by saying:

DEVADATTA. Padmini, I've told you ten times already... I don't like the idea of this trip. You should rest—not face such hazards. The cart will probably shake like an earthquake. It's dangerous in your condition. But you won't listen... (Karnad, 1994)

Devadatta gives a reference to the hazards he foresees regarding his marital relationship. Similarly in Act 2 Padmini decides to see Kapila in the forest but makes a plan to send Devadatta on the Ujjain fair and does not disclose her husband that it was a mere arrangement of fulfilling her desire of meeting Kapila. Padmini, therefore, selects the words as a camouflage by saying:

PADMINI. The Ujjain fair is to be held in another four days. Why don't you go and get new dolls there? If you start today you'll be there in time for it. It's unlucky to keep torn dolls at home... (Karnad, 1994)

The characters portrayed by Karnad face the societal pressure and they cannot express their feelings openly. For example, in the play *Naga-Mandala* (1988), Karnad has utilised a psychological mask for Appanna (the husband). He appears to be an apathetic husband during the day because of the pressure of society but this very man is presented in the form of a Naag for his wife at night, full of love for her. Similarly, in another play by Karnad, *Tughlaq* (1964), the characters bother a lot about their appearance. They are more concerned with what

The others feel than what they actually desire. No doubt, they try to eliminate this gap but their endeavor needs mettle. Padmini loves Kapila but she does not desire it to be known to Devadatta because she is married to Devadatta and is aware of the reality that the husband and the society will not approve of this conduct. It is through the dialogue exchange between the dolls - used as masks for Padmini that the hidden emotions of this female character are revealed to the audience. Kapila too loves Padmini but moreover he is not willing to declare it overtly because of the societal norms. Devadatta starts detesting Kapila following his matrimony, however, he would not communicate this to Kapila openly. The dialogues delivered by Devadatta perform the function of a mask for his wife and friend but this mask conveys the real feelings to the audience.

The various conventions - music, mime, masks, and the framing narrative, the mixing of human and non-human worlds - are here used for a simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view, for alternative analyses of human problem posed by a story from the *Kathasaritsagar*. ([Karnad 'Author's Introduction', 1994](#))

Karnad, in the introduction to his own English translation of the play published in 1975, says as follows:

The idea of my play *Hayavadana* (1971) started crystallizing in my head right in the middle of an argument with B. V. Karanth (who ultimately produced the play) about the meaning of masks in Indian theatre and theatre's relationship to music. ([Karnad 'Author's Introduction', 1994](#))

The different techniques employed for exposition in the play signify the importance of masks in the theatre of India. Karnad has made use of the masks and music for the revelation of hidden emotions in the play. Western theatre has established a distinction concerning the face and the mask - the real private person and the outward that one presents, desires to present, or wishes to be perceived by the outer world. Throughout the play Karnad employed numerous devices such as entry curtains, songs, and puppets for presenting the diversified use of masks. Western theatre audience is aware of Bertolt Brecht's style being profoundly inclined to Chinese performance. In his play, *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (1947), there are characters, who take on the expression and role of another character by putting on that character's mask. Karnad uses this skill of mask swapping in the exchanging of Kapila and Devadatta's heads that is revealed through the dialogue exchange amongst the main characters in the play as follows:

DEVADATTA. (*a little more alive.*) Why are you—crying?

KAPILA. What's—wrong?

PADMINI. What shall I tell you, Devadatta? How can I explain it, Kapila? You cut off your heads—but the goddess gave you life—but—I—I—in the dark... Mother only you can protect me now—I mixed them up!... ([Karnad, 1994](#))

## Half-Curtain

Karnad utilises half-curtain as mask as an innovative technique for the revelation of characters and the hidden realities on the stage. The entrance of Hayavadana on the stage is facilitated by the use of half-curtain. This curtain acts like a mask to prepare the audience for the sight of this half horse-half man figure by presenting:

(*Two stage-hands enter and hold up a half-curtain, about six feet in height - the sort of curtain used in Yakshagana or Kathakali. The curtain masks the entry of Hayavadana, who comes and stands behind it.*) ([Karnad, 1994](#))

On the instructions of Bhagavata, who acts like a stage manager, the curtain is lowered. The head of Hayavadana is revealed to the audience which is again covered behind a veil—another mask used for Hayavadana. On becoming conscious that Hayavadana is exposed to the outer world, this character once again hides behind the half-curtain making the audience ponder over the fact that there is something grossly wrong with the character:

(*The curtain is lowered by about a foot. One sees Hayavadana's head, which is covered by a veil. At a sign from the Bhagavata, one of the stage-hands removes the veil, revealing a horse's head. For a while the horse-head doesn't realize that it is exposed to the gaze of the audience. The moment the realization dawns, the head ducks behind the curtain.*) ([Karnad, 1994](#))

There are layers of masks used for the exposure of Hayavadana to the audience. After the gradual lowering of the curtains and the removal of the veil, Hayavadana tries to hide his head by using his own body as a mask. This behaviour and an effort to hide the head from the world strengthen the theme regarding the significance of the head over body. This stress on the exposure of Hayavadana's head links up the sub-plot with the main-plot

Where the debate on the importance of head over body is presented through the two friends - Devadatta and Kapila:

*(...The curtain is lowered a little more - just enough to show the head again. Again it ducks. Again the curtain is lowered. This goes on till the curtain is lowered right down to the floor. Hayavadana, who has a man's body but a horse's head, is sitting on the floor hiding his head between his knees.) (Karnad, 1994)*

Karnad re-employs the half-curtains in the play for preparing the audience regarding the entrance of goddess Kali on stage. Even before Kali comes on stage, the very picture reveals what the goddess would do by using the picture of Kali as a prop:

*(Two stage-hands come and hold up a half-curtain in the corner to which he (Bhagavata) points. The curtain has a picture of goddess Kali on it. The Bhagavata puts a sword in front of it.) (Karnad, 1994)*

To prepare the audience regarding the upcoming action, the curtain is again employed as mask. At this point, before Kali would physically appear on stage, her voice is heard from behind this curtain:

*(Lifts the sword and put its point on her (Padmini's) breast when from behind the curtain the goddess's voice is heard.) (Karnad, 1994)*

Curtains are used to reveal the character of Kali—known as a goddess of revenge amongst Hindus. The blood-red palms of Kali are shown to the audience before her horrifying figure and this is facilitated by lowering the curtain as per requirement. Act 1 of the play *Hayavadana* (1971) ends with the use of a white curtain placed in front of the frozen characters of Devadatta, Padmini, and Kapila. By hiding the characters from the sight of the audience, the white curtain also reveals the future of these main characters i.e. they all will die in the end. By inter-changing the masks used by both the friends, the union among Padmini, Devadatta, and Kapila simultaneously is materialised. On the other hand, the curtain is used on stage, as a new technique used by Karnad for masks, to present Kali on stage and to create the effect of fear and terror. The stage directions reveal how the character of Kali is brought to the stage with the help of curtains that disclose the identity of Kali rather than hiding it:

*(A tremendous noise of drums. Padmini shuts her eyes in terror. Behind the curtain one sees the uplifted blood-red palms of the goddess. The curtain is lowered and taken away and one sees a terrifying figure, her arms stretched out, her mouth wide open with the tongue lolling out...) (Karnad, 1994)*

In the second Act of the play *Hayavadana* (1971), Karnad makes use of the curtains for the depiction of the fate of Padmini. We can also compare the function of curtain at this stage with the functioning of *Dues Ex Machina* used by the Greeks to inform the audience about the action taken place off-stage. Sometimes the stage curtain also functions as a mask in Karnad's play *Hayavadana* (1971) to convey the future of the character which otherwise cannot be performed on stage. The blazing fire painted on the curtain conveys to the audience that Padmini has performed Sati:

*(...The stage-hands lift the curtain, slowly, very slowly, very slowly, as the song goes on. The curtain has a blazing fire painted on it. And as it is lifted, the flames seem to leap up...) (Karnad, 1994)*

## Findings of the Study

Although postcolonial studies have investigated the several boundaries that women negotiate as they participate in the practice of giving and taking their subjectivities, the article has focused on that dreadful spectacle that highlights Spivak's study to a socio-political truth: widow-burning or, in the local language, sati. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak pronounces sati as follows:

The Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it. This is widow sacrifice. (The conventional transcription of the Sanskrit word for the widow would be sati. The early colonial British transcribed it suttee.) The rite was not practiced universally and was not caste- or class-fixed. The abolition of this rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of 'White men saving brown women from brown men': Against this is the Indian nativist argument, a parody of the nostalgia for lost origins: 'the women actually want to die' (Spivak, 1994)

Here we perceive that the subservience of women to the elevation of male control includes their repudiation of breath and existence: the subaltern woman is not merely expected to perish to preserve the honour of her dead husband, but is definitely imagined to want bereavement. The death of the sacrificed is grounded on the

Death of her husband. It may, at a primary glimpse, look abnormal that a Hindu woman is sanctified in death simply if she jumps into the fire that symbolises patriarchal discourse-that no supplementary arrangement of suicide is tolerable in the defence of her dead husband's honour. Santosh Singh enlightens that:

A woman, unable to bear the pangs of separation from her deceased husband, considers her life futile without him, ends her life by taking poison or by hanging herself or by jumping into a well, river or lake, or throws herself from high altitude, is not considered a 'Sati.' Such step of her [sic] would only be termed as a suicide and would not have so much respect as a 'Sati' gets by immolating herself upon the funeral pyre of the dead body of her husband. Even if she burns herself at some place away from the funeral pyre of her husband, she is not deemed 'Sati' ([Singh, 1989](#)).

A widow's suicide is not in itself a deed of sati, for, as directed by Hinduism, sati is a representational re-performance of the myth of Lord Shiva and his wife, the goddess Sati. In the legend, the goddess is exasperated by her father's dearth of reverence concerning her husband, and in revenge she forces her body to be consumed in an eruption of flames springing from within herself.

The Hindu woman's immolation hence befits a representation-a citation-of the action by which Sati well-preserved her husband's honour and obtained sympathetic verdict for herself from a society that watched her departure. A Hindu woman instantly believes herself praiseworthy to award herself the supreme gift of all: death by honour. She gives up an identity in giving up her existence; however, in the discharge of her identity as a widow, she instantaneously accepts an alternative: that of Shiva's wife. Whereas she contemplates into the flames for a future that assures an approving rebirth whilst protecting the honour of her dead husband, the Hindu woman understands the worldly existence behind her as an assurance of living hell.

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