English paper- 8

HAYAVADANA

BY GIRISH KARNAD

Ø ***HAYAVADAN Summary***

The play opens with a prayer ritual performed by Hindus to the god Ganesha, who has the head of an elephant and the body of a boy. Bhagavata asks that Ganesha bless the performance that he and the assembled company are about to perform, and then tells the audience that the play is set in Dharmapura, and the central characters are close friends Devadatta and Kapila.

A scream comes from offstage and an actor runs on screaming that he has just seen a man with the head of a horse and a human voice. Bhagavata does not believe him and even when the creature enters he thinks a prank is being played and that the horse head is actually a mask. He tries to pull it off but realizes it is a real head. The creature is called Hayavadana and he explains that he is the son of a princess and a god in equine form. All he wants is to become a full man. Bhagavata suggests that he go to the temple of Kali, the Hindu goddess of death, because she is known to grant any wish that anyone has. Hayavadana does as he suggests.

After he leaves, the narrator continues talking to the audience where he left off, explaining that the two young men are both in love with the same girl. Devadatta, who is a slender intellectual and poet, and Kapila, who is muscular and darker-complected, enter. Devadatta tells of his love for Padmini. He claims he would sacrifice his head and arms if he could marry her.

Kapila decides to find where she lives because he sees that his friend is truly lovesick. He goes to the street where she lives and knocks on every door until he finds her home. When she answers the door he falls head over heels in love at first sight. He woos her on Devadatta's behalf but he privately believes that Padmini is too quick-witted for him and that Devadatta is too sensitive for a woman like her.

Padmini and Devadatta are married quickly and all three continue to be friends. Padmini becomes pregnant with a son but Devadatta starts to believe that she is a little too affectionate with Kapila. They are planning a trip together to the Ujjain fair but when Devadatta tells Padmini that he wishes he could spend more alone time with her (secretly jealous of Kapila, whom he knows has feelings for his wife), she offers to cancel the trip. When Kapila arrives, though, she changes her mind and decides to take the trip as planned.

As the trip progresses, Padmini pays Kapila many compliments. Devadatta sulks and becomes more and more envious. They pass the temple of Kali, and Devadatta remembers his pledge to cut off his head if he were to be allowed to marry Padmini. Full of grief over his disintegrating marriage, he strikes off his head. When Kapila goes to look for Devadatta, he finds his decapitated body and in his grief beheads himself as well.

The men are gone for so long that Padmini becomes worried. She sets off to look for them and when she finds their bodies, she tries to kill herself. The goddess Kali appears to her and tells her that if she agrees to put the men's heads back on their bodies herself then they will be brought back to life. Padmini is so excited by this that she puts the wrong heads on the wrong

bodies by mistake; the men come back to life but Devadatta's head is on Kapila's body, and vice versa.

Everyone thinks this is quite funny at first, but when they get home, there are complications. Both men feel that Padmini is his wife. Devadatta says as the head rules the body, she must be his wife, whereas Kapila argues that as the child she is carrying was fathered by his body then it is he who is her husband. After deliberation, Padmini elects to remain with Devadatta's head. Kapila is left behind and goes to live in the forest.

The union between Devadatta and Padmini is initially strong as she feels that this is a new, brawny, improved version of her husband. When they buy two dolls to give to their new baby son, the dolls begin to address the audience and fill them in on what happens next. Over time, Devadatta's body reverts to how it used to be and he and Padmini start to fight a lot over the best way to raise their son.

Padmini starts to think once again of Kapila. She takes her son to the forest to show it to him for the first time, and she finds Kapila living there. As Devadatta has lost physical strength over time, so has Kapila regained his. He accepts that he is fully Kapila. Padmini stays in the forest for several nights with Kapila. When Devadatta finds them together he is distraught and the men decide to kill each other to end the rivalry once and for all. After they are dead, Padmini throws herself upon the funeral pyre. Before doing so, she tells Bhagavata to give her son to hunters to raise, and when he is five to bring him to the Brahman, Devadatta's father and thus the child's grandfather.

The tragedy is offset by a man who comes onstage telling of a horse walking down the street singing the national anthem. Another actor joins him on stage with a crying child, who is Padmini and Devadatta's son. Hayavadana returns to the stage, and tells of how he asked Kali to make him complete, but rather than making him a complete man, she made him a complete horse instead. Padmini's son likes him and the two sing and laugh together. Hayavadana wishes that his voice was not human and Padmini's son tells him to laugh. As he does so, the laugh becomes less like that of a man and more like the whinnying of a horse.

The play ends with Bhagavata heralding the mercy of Ganesha for helping Hayavadana and Padmini's son. He begins to pray and thanks the Lord for the successful performance of their play.

Ø About the play:-

Hayavadana is a 1971 play by Indian writer Girish Karnad. It tells the story of best friends Devadatta and Kapila, and their love, Padmini, as well as that of a man in the story with the face of a horse (the title of the okat means "one with a horse's head") who is seeking to become human.

When Karnad was a boy, in 1947, India became independent from British colonial rule. Among other things, this changed the face of Indian theater, which had previously consisted of performances of the works of William Shakespeare. Indian playwrights and directors wanted to break free from the constraints that colonization had put upon them and consequently theater

became more about classical dance, long-held religious ritual and legend, and Sanskrit. This era of Indian theater became known as the "theater of roots" period. Karnad's ***Hayavadana*** is from this period and as such contains the religious and ethical Sanskrit elements of the movement, but it also contains westernization in the form of Greek chorus and masks.

Karnad was inspired by Thomas Mann's ***The Transposed Heads,*** which in turn was inspired by an eleventh-century Sanskrit text called the ***Kathasaritsagara.*** He also adopted the performative model of Yakshagana, the theater from the region of Kannada, where Karnad was born.

Hayavadana was originally written in Karnad's second language, Kannada, and he translated it into English himself. It was originally published in ***Enact,*** and came out in an edition by Oxford University Press in 1975 in the New Drama in India series.

The play was first produced in Madras, India by the Madras Players. Karnad said that "the idea of my play ***Hayvadana*** started crystallizing in my head right in the middle of an argument with B.V. Karnath...about the meaning of masks in Indian theatre and theatre's relationship to music." ***Hayavadana*** won the Sangeet Natak Akaddemi Award and the Kamaladevi Award of the Bharatiya Natya Sangh for best Indian play.

Ø Act Wise Summary:-

v *Act One*

The Bhagavata sits on a chair at a table. A mask of Ganesha is brought in and ***Pooja*** (a worship ritual) is done. The Bhagavata sings, and the mask is then taken away.

The Bhagavata opens by reflecting on Ganesha, the Vighneshwara, who with his strange appearance is still the Lord and Master of Success and Perfection, which might remind us that we cannot fathom the completeness of God. We must only, he says, pay homage to the Elephant God and begin the play.

He describes the setting—the city of Dharmapura, ruled by King Dharmasheeka—and our two protagonists—Devadatta, handsome, slight, fair, intelligent, son of a Brahmin, poet, and witty; and Kapila, dark, plain, muscular, strong, physically impressive. As he talks there is a scream offstage, but he continues and says the two men are very different but the best of friends.

Suddenly Nata, the Actor, comes out in fearful fluster. Yelling, he clutches Bhagavata, who tries to discern what is going on. The Actor pants in his haste and tries to explain, but is too overcome. Finally he is able to say how he was coming along the road and stopped to pee, but then saw and heard a talking horse. Bhagavata is dismissive and amused but the Actor insists he is not drunk and he saw it clearly.

Bhagavata sees the man must continue his recounting, however false, so he encourages him to do so. He then suggests the only thing the Actor can do is go back to the fence and reassure himself that the horse does not talk. The Actor is shocked and resists this idea, but Bhagavata orders him. The Actor gives Bhagavata a last look and reluctantly departs.

As Bhagavata begins to sing once more of the best friends, another scream is heard and the Actor rushes back in. He yells that "he" is coming and rushes back out. Bhagavata is perplexed, but it

is clear *something* has frightened the Actor. He hopes the audience will not become frightened as well.

Bhagavata orders stagehands to pull up the curtain, which then masks the entry of Hayavadana. Bhagavata calls out to ask who is there, and he only hears sobbing. The curtain reveals a horse head, which is crying, and finally a man's body attached to the horse head. Bhagavata is stunned, and calls the horse-man over.

Hayavadana sniffles and obeys. Bhagavata sternly asks what he is doing scaring people and bothering the audience with his stupid mask. He orders Hayavadana to take off the mask, and when he does not, tries to grab it himself. He realizes it is *not* a mask but the man's real head. He asks him several times who he is. Hayavadana remains silent until Bhagavata asks if this is a curse, or the result of an insult, or if he desecrated a holy place.

Hayavadana finally speaks, indignant and annoyed at these questions. Bhagavata apologizes and asks for his story. Hayavadana sighs that this is his fate, and he let Bhagavata try to pull the head off because he cannot seem to get rid of it himself. He explains that his mother was the Princess of Karnataka and able to choose her own husband. She did not like any of the men she knew, but when the Prince of Araby came on his white stallion, she fell in love with the horse and would only marry it. No one could dissuade her so the marriage happened. One morning she woke up and the horse was gone, replaced by a Celestial Being who had been cursed as a horse for fifteen years for misbehavior. The love of a human rescued him, and he asked the Princess to come with him to the Heavenly Abode. Shockingly, she refused, and he cursed her and *she* became a horse. She was elated and ran away, and Hayavadana, their only offspring, remained with his human body and horse head. He has tried to accept his fate, he explains, and live a full life, but he desires to become a "complete man" (81).

Musing, the Bhagavata suggests Banaras. Hayavadana says he has been there already and then names off numerous other holy spots he has tried. Bhagavata suggests the Kali of Mount Chitrakoot, and Hayavadana shrugs that it is worth a try.

Bhagavata is pleased and says Hayavadana cannot go alone so the Actor must accompany him. The Actor is not happy but has to do what Bhagavata says. Hayavadana thanks Bhagavata, who blesses him in return.

After the two depart, Bhagavata says it is time to get back to their story.

The Bhagavata sings of the two friends and the woman who came between them. The Female Chorus joins him.

Devadatta enters, lost in thought. Kapila follows, and asks Devadatta why he did not come to the gymnasium, where he engaged in a fantastic, impromptu wrestling match. He then sees Devadatta is not listening and seems flustered. He asks who it is this time, implying a girl, and Devadatta blushes and asks how he knew. Kapila smiles that he has seen Devadatta fall in love fifteen times before.

Devadatta waxes poetic about this new one, annoyed that Kapila is seemingly mocking him. Kapila soothes him, telling him he'd do anything for him and he has learned so much from him. Devadatta is still querulous and tells him to go back to his smithy. Hurt, Kapila starts to go, but Devadatta tells him to sit down.

Devadatta begins to describe the woman, whose "beauty is as the magic lake" (84). He thought he knew poetry before her, he sighs, but he did not. She has become "my guru in the poetry of love" (85) but he wants her in real life as well.

Kapila muses privately that this actually seems new, and asks the girl's name. Devadatta does not know, and is anguished that he is not good enough for her anyway. Kapila tells him any parent would want him, and he is the catch of the city. Devadatta is not consoled, and cries desperately. He feels his poetry cannot live without her and he has no future.

When Devadatta mentions the street she lives on, Pavana Veethi, Kapila immediately decides he will go there and find out her name and woo her for his friend. Devadatta cannot remember many details about the house he saw her go into, but Kapila bounds away anyway.

Once he is gone, Devadatta marvels at what a good friend Kapila is. However, he also thinks Kapila is too rough, too "indelicate" and maybe "the wrong man to send" (87). He prays to Lord Rudra and Kali. Meanwhile, Kapila marvels at the extravagant houses of merchants on the street. He knocks at the door of one and Padmini answers. She is startlingly beautiful and Kapila understands what Devadatta feels. He asks whose house this is and Padmini asks who he is looking for. They go back and forth and Padmini asks why he has been going up and down the street looking at houses. She whispers that there have been many thefts recently and he should be grateful she does not call the police.

Kapila becomes desperate, as he does not know how to formulate his questions, and knows he ***has*** to find out her name. He begs her and says he will touch her feet. She eagerly perks up and says no one has ever touched her feet though she's touched everyone's in the house. Kapila is shaken by her boldness and she scoffs that she knew he would not do it.

Finally she simply asks what he wants and Kapila asks if she has heard of the Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara. She replies it is possible, and he continues by mentioning the son, Devadatta, a delicate and handsome poet and pundit. He says he is the greatest friend in the world to him. Padmini knows what is happening, and blushes, calls for her mother, and runs inside. Kapila follows her, knowing he has to talk to the family, but privately thinking she is too fast and too sharp for the likes of Devadatta.

Bhagavata explains that Padmini is the daughter of the leading merchant in Dharmapura. The house is full of wealth and learning. She does indeed marry Devadatta and moves into his home. Devadatta owes Kapila a debt and their friendship flourishes as never before.

Devadatta and Padmini enter. They are preparing to go on a trip with Kapila, but Devadatta is unsure he wants Padmini to go because she is with child. She scoffs at him, saying he acts like she is the first woman to ever get pregnant. She then wonders where Kapila is, just as Devadatta is chiding her for her propensity to chatter and drool over Kapila all day.

Padmini stops short and asks what he means. Kapila is ***his*** friend, after all. Devadatta says that Kapila should see that he is married now and cannot drop in whenever he wants. Padmini tells him not to blame her, and that she thought it was good Kapila came over the other day to learn poetry from him. Devadatta sighs that he is not blaming her and Kapila is more like a brother than a friend. He wonders, though, if it is wrong to want some time with just the two of them, husband and wife.

Padmini asks if he is jealous of Kapila. Devadatta is annoyed at this and she laughs and tells him not to sulk. Padmini tells him she knows he is liberal and openhearted and could never get

jealous; in fact, if she died tomorrow he wouldn't care. Devadatta is shocked and Padmini apologizes for saying whatever comes into her head. Finally, Padmini comforts Devadatta by saying he is her everything and Kapila is just an innocent and a baby. They both laugh in recognition of this.

Devadatta wonders, though, if she does not see how Kapila looks at her. He tells her that Kapila is not used to women. She wonders if he means Kapila is dangerous, which makes Devadatta mad. She tells him the trip can be canceled, and they will spend the day together and go to Ujjain some other time. Devadatta is excited to hear this and starts to think about how they will spend the whole day by themselves.

Kapila arrives and Padmini tells Devadatta to tell him the trip is off. She stands hidden in a corner. Kapila is excitedly talking but Devadatta cuts him off and tells him their trip is canceled. Kapila is very distressed and wonders what he is to do now, and why it feels like the "whole world has been wiped out for a whole week" (94).

As he glumly prepares to leave, Padmini rushes in and asks why they are both sitting there, as it is time to go. Devadatta is stunned and Kapila looks to Devadatta. Padmini brusquely pushes them to get ready. She tells Devadatta quietly that Kapila looked so lost and disappointed. Devadatta thinks to himself that his own disappointment does not seem to matter to her.

The three of them set out. Padmini is in a vivacious mood, praising Kapila's driving and comparing it to Devadatta's. The two of them are laughing as Devadatta sulks. Padmini asks Kapila about a pretty tree up ahead and he explains that it is the Fortunate Lady's flower, which means a married woman. When Padmini asks what he means, he does not hesitate and leaps out of the cart. She marvels at how he climbs so vigorously, how his muscles ripple. He looks like a Celestial Being. Devadatta thinks how this is the first time she's been silent since they started, but he can see Kapila's muscles and understands her desire. No woman can resist Kapila, and he must strangle his agony and not be a coward. Padmini wonders how long she can go on like this. Her eyes meet Devadatta's, and they both look away. Kapila comes back with many flowers and shows her the parts pf the flower that has "all the marks of marriage a woman puts on" (97).

Devadatta wants to continue on their path, but Padmini wants to stay. She becomes excited when Kapila says there is a temple of Rudra nearby. He says it is dilapidated now, but the Kali one nearby is even worse. Padmini wants to look and Devadatta mournfully tells the two to go ahead. Padmini is annoyed at his tantrum and Kapila does not know what to do.

The two eventually walk off to the temple and Devadatta stays behind. He wishes for courage and decides to walk to Kali's temple. He asks for forgiveness from her once he gets to the temple, and finding a sword there, strikes off his own head in anguish.

Padmini and Kapila return to the cart. They do not see Devadatta and Padmini scoffs at how worried Kapila seems about him. Kapila rushes off to find him while she waits.

He finds his decapitated friend and moans that he does not know why Devadatta was so angry, and how he could forget that Kapila loved him and would do anything for him. He picks up the sword and claims they can be brothers in the next world. He strikes his own head off.

Padmini grows weary of waiting for the men and walks to the temple in the dark. She calls their names and then stumbles over the bodies. She is shocked and cries out she does not know what to do. What will she tell people? They will be bound to say these men killed themselves for her. She decides she must die as well, and picks up the sword.

As she is about the kill herself, the goddess' voice sounds out and tells her to put down the sword. Padmini is frightened, especially when the curtain reveals the terrifying goddess. Her mouth is agape, but she is actually just yawning. Padmini rushes to her feet and prostrates herself.

Kali sleepily sighs that yes, it is she, and asks what Padmini wants because she is pleased with her. She tells Padmini to put the heads back on their bodies and be done with it. Padmini has a question and asks, if the goddess knows everything, and the "past and future are mere specks in your palm" (102), then why did she not spare the men so Padmini would not have to go through this? Kali is surprised and amused by her selfishness, and replies that the men were annoying her because Devadatta prayed to Rudra and Kapila died right in front of her for his friend without even referring to her. She tells Padmini to do what she said.

Padmini puts the heads back on their bodies but in the dark accidentally mixes them up. She presses the sword on their necks, does namasakra, and readies herself. Drums sound and the goddess disappears. The dead bodies begin to stir and sit up, their movements mechanical at first. They realize that their heads are on the wrong bodies and ask Padmini what happened. She is flummoxed and apologetic, but they all begin to laugh and dance around. They know no one will believe them but they do not care, and happily decide to head back home.

Their bliss fades once they realize it is unclear with whom Padmini should go home. Devadatta (this refers to Devadatta's head on Kapila's body) says the head is the "sign of a man" (106) but Kapila (this refers to Kapila's head on Devadatta's body) says ***this*** hand married her, and ***this*** body lived with her. Devadatta says a person marries a person, not a body, and that "Of all the human limbs the topmost—in position as well as importance—is the head" (107). Padmini is convinced by Devadatta's arguments and wants to go with him.

Kapila steps between them and Devadatta pushes him away. Kapila exults that clearly this is ***not*** Devadatta because he is using force and never would have acted like this. Kapila angrily tells Padmini he knows she wants Devadatta's head and Kapila's body, and Devadatta himself says this makes sense.

Padmini cries that they must get rid of the scoundrel, and Kapila yells that they will have to kill him first before they ever escape him. They cannot figure out what the solution to this is.

Bhagavata interrupts and says this is indeed a dilemma, and a deep and perplexing problem whose "answer must be sought with the greatest caution" (108). He tells the audience to take a ten-minute break and ponder this, and then come back with solutions.

- ***Analysis***

Girish Karnad's ***Hayavadana,*** which means "horse-head," is one of the playwright's most accomplished works. Amusing, profound, and a fusion of Indian dramatic motifs, structures, and myths with elements of the Western, it is an apposite example of the "theatre of roots" (see Other in this study guide).

The play begins with Bhagavata, a figure who is devoted to worshipping the god Vishnu. Bhagavata is the play's narrator and theatre director and its guide, offering commentary on characters and actors and even the audience. Karnad emphasizes the multiple layers of the

theatre experience through this figure, as Bhagavata often talks to the audience; additionally, the Actors come onstage as if they are not actually acting yet ("What do you mean by all this shouting and screaming? In front of our audience too!" [74]). There is a slippage between what the audience sees as the play and what they perceive to be "real."

Bhagavata begins with an evocation to Ganesha, the god with the elephant head and boy's body. He marvels at how the god seems "the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness" (73), yet how we venerate him nonetheless. This must be a lesson that "the completeness of God is something no poor mortal can comprehend…It is not for us to understand this Mystery or try to unravel it. Nor is it within our power to do so" (73). This is not a random allusion, of course, but one that foreshadows the events and the themes of the play. Amara Khan writes, "In this framework, Karnad has used the mask of Ganesha to announce another incomplete character that is Hayavadana. Karnad presents Ganesha as an outer agency for ensuring the success of the play and to design the play in traditional ***Yakshagana*** form. In the text of ***Hayavadana*** we perceive that at the very beginning of the play, it is through the mask of Ganesha that hybridity is offered as the best solution for life." Indeed, Hayavadana appears mere moments after this introduction, another creature fused from two disparate species and one whose "completion" at the end of the play defies rational understanding.

The ***Yakshagana*** form that Khan mentions is a type of traditional, regional Indian theater that Karnad much admired, especially as a child, and one that relies upon masks. Karnad stated once that writing a play like ***Hayavadana*** "seemed to me to provide perfect justification for the use of masks. For...in Indian traditional theatre, as in the Greek, the mask is only the face writ large." He desired to draw upon "this paraphernalia of masks, half curtains, mime, dance, and music." ***Yakashagana*** also features stylized action, of which Khan notes, "this technique constantly reminds the audience that they are watching a play and not a slice of life, resulting in some amount of distance between the play and the audience psychologically."

A final note about this first section: Bhagavata begins by talking about the story that is going to unfold with Devadatta and Kapila, but Hayavadana interrupts him. The Hayavadana plot is a sub-plot, as will become very clear to audience/reader, and does not resolve itself until the very end of the play just as the audience thinks it is time to get up and leave. Karnad wanted to have his sub-plot intertwined with the main plot, and explained he'd "always felt tremendous fascination for Shakespeare's sub-plots—how he tells us the same story twice, from two different points of view." As we progress further into the play, we will see how this parallelism manifests itself.

From the very beginning of the main plot, it is clear that Devadatta and Kapila are intended to be complements of each other. One is fair, slender, and an intellectual; the other is brawny, dark, and disinclined toward scholarly pursuits. Devadatta is the head and Kapila is the body, and Padmini, the third member of this trio, wants both. This main plot along with the sub-plot of Hayavadana makes it abundantly clear that the play is a meditation on identity—fragmented identity, completeness, complete selves, etc. What makes a person—the head or the body?

Padmini is not representative of either the head or the body. She seems to be the most complete and complex of the trio; critic Maria-Sabrina Draga Alexandru writes, "Padmini, the only character in the trio who wears no mask, is also the most complex one in the play, to the point

where the two male characters and the events in which she is involved can be read as projections of her desires, of her confusion, of the cataclysmic changes in her perceptions." She is onstage throughout almost every scene and her lack of mask implies that we are to perceive Devadatta and Kapila through her eyes. Alexandru adds, "whilst Karnad's interest in psychology and character development is arguably a borrowing from Western theatre, his use of myth acts as an important reference point. The theatrical universe is also subordinated to the changes occurring in Padmini's consciousness."

Padmini is also a notable character for what Karnad does with her gender. Yes, she is a typical Indian woman in that she marries, has a child, and, strikingly, commits ***sati*** at the end. Yet that is where Padmini's embodiment of tradition and oppression ends. She is witty, sharp, selfish, and authentic; she is openly concupiscent and sensual. Critic Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker focuses on the attitudes toward gender that Indian playwrights, who in this era of ***Hayavadana*** were typically male, possess. In the "theatre of roots," we see the move "out of the urban social-realist mode into the antimodern, antirealistic, charismatic realm of folk culture" as a conduit to female characters' more subversive speech and subtle challenging of traditional gender roles.

Dharwadker identifies the following elements as part of this observation: "women in these works are objects of desire as well as desiring subjects, and they want something other than what society has ordained for them. The very presence of such desire violates the norms of feminine behavior and disturbs established notions of propriety. Second, women succeed in their quest because of the interchangeability of male partners…there is no unique male self to which the woman owes fidelity—a notion that questions the principle of male proprietorship and hence undermines a basic premise of patriarchy. Third, while realist drama emphasizes and often romanticizes the maternal roles, folk narratives stress the feminine, but not necessarily the maternal." Women like Padmini are "self-possessed and vocal," pursue their desires but sometimes "[destroy] her male partner (lover or husband) in the process."

One of the ways that Karnad explores these aspects of Padmini's subversiveness is through the Female Chorus, which Amara Khan deems Padmini's "mask." The Chorus "gives voice to the desires and feelings of Padmini who becomes a doubly oppressed subject by colonialism and patriarchy in India. Karnad through this mask for Padmini not only exposes her subalternity but also fuses energy in her life so that she can speak her heart out. Karnad, therefore, shifts Padmini's position from the margin to the centre." Mohit K. Ray agrees, explaining that "the chorus in ***Hayavadana*** is not the voice of traditional wisdom as in Greek plays but only an externalization and objectification of the passionate feelings of Padmini and it merges with the protagonist as an integral component of the character. The Female Chorus's most frequent refrain is this—"Why should love stick to the 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?...I have neither regret nor shame" (132)—which aptly expresses Padmini's unwillingness to remain confined within the mental, sexual, or literal bonds of marriage to one man.

v ***Act Two***

Bhagavata begins, asking what the audience thinks the solution to this problem is. He speaks of King Vikrama ruling the world long ago, and how he was asked the same question by the demon Vetala, and how the king offered a rational solution. He wonders if this will work for the three.

Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini go to a great *rishi,* and the *rishi* gives the solution: "As the heavenly Kalpa Vriksha is supreme among trees, so is the head among human limbs" (110), so Devadatta's head on Kapila's' body gets to be with Padmini.

Padmini and Devadatta scream with joy and embrace each other, while Kapila is mournful. Padmini exults over her husband's "wide chest" (111) and he laughs joyfully at her words. As they prepare to leave, Padmini tells Kapila not to despair, and whispers that she is going with his body, after all.

After Devadatta and Padmini leave, Bhagavata tells Kapila not to grieve, for this is fate.

Bhagavata narrates that their worlds diverge. Kapila goes to live in the woods and never sees the city again. Devadatta and Padmini return to Dharmapura to experience the joys of married life.

Padmini is stitching clothes and Devadatta enters with two large dolls. Padmini is pleased with the dolls and Devadatta says they are for their child, who is coming soon. Padmini asks about the fair, grumbling that she could not go, and Devadatta happily explains that he saw a wrestling match and was compelled to participate and won. He is intrigued as to how this new body simply acts and does not wait for thoughts. He has been running around and yet does not feel tired.

Devadatta and Padmini embrace, but she smells sandal oil on him and asks why he is wearing it. He is perturbed, wondering if she wants that "unwashed, sweaty smell Kapila had" (113). She replies lightly that it was just a suggestion.

After they leave, the dolls start to talk to each other. They are acerbic and snobbish, remembering the awful people they saw at the fair and wondering if this child will even deserve them.

The child is born, and the dolls complain about its crying and messiness. They know Padmini's dreams and should have known that something was going on and there was a child inside her. They are dispirited, frustrated that the child gets all their attention. When Padmini and Devadatta walk in with the child, talking about it, they watch and bemoan that no one has come near them for six months.

Padmini is saying to Devadatta that she wants to take the baby to the lake; after all, he is six months old now. Devadatta refuses and says it is too much trouble. She is annoyed, and replies that he never does anything anymore except sit around. Devadatta protests that he is a Brahmin, and while the new body was fun at first, it became too hard to maintain. He has to read and write and care for his family.

Devadatta puts his hand on her shoulder and she involuntarily shudders. Devadatta looks at her curiously, and goes to find a book. Padmini says she will help. Alone again, the dolls talk about Devadatta's hands, which were rough at first and are now soft, and his stomach, which is now flabby. They mock him and wonder if he will also fill up with child.

Padmini enters, singing a lullaby about a horse and rider galloping to an unknown land. Devadatta comes in while she sings. The dolls notice that Padmini is dreaming of someone who is not her husband. They wonder at this, and the dream fades.

Devadatta has a sharp shoulder pain and tells Padmini he went to the gym and then swimming. She frowns and asks why, and he says he just felt like it and she should not ask any more

questions. Padmini asks him why he fears going soft again. He leaves angrily, saying he knows he is foolish.

Padmini muses that Devadatta should not be afraid; she will not be stupid again, and Kapila is out of her life. Yet, she wonders where he is and what he is doing. The dolls sense she is thinking of the man again, seeing him climbing trees and diving into the river. Then the dream is gone.

Devadatta comes in. He is as slender and slight as he once was. He tells Padmini he has a pundit coming over to hear about some verses, and asks her to watch the child. She tells him she heard that Kapila's mother died this morning, which aggravates Devadatta, who asks what he can do about it.

Once alone again, the dolls think about the shameless dream Padmini had. They devolve into arguing and fighting and wrestle on the floor. They tear their clothes and finally sit up, giggling. Padmini comes in and sighs at their condition.

Devadatta joins her and she tells him they must have new dolls for the baby, as it has ruined these. She suggests he go to the fair; if he starts now, he can be there in time. The dolls are aghast that she would want to rid of them. They curse her.

Devadatta says he will go, but it will take more than a week to go and come back. He wonders if he should get a neighbor to go instead, or if someone should come stay with them. Padmini replies that no, they do not live in a forest and will be fine. Devadatta departs. The dolls are furious.

Once Devadatta is gone, Padmini whispers to her child that she is going to take him to the forest, which he has never seen before. She paints a picture of its majesty and beauty, and once they are there, points out the tree of the Fortunate Lady.

Kapila enters, strong as he was at the beginning of the play. Bhagavata asks Kapila if it is really him, and how he can live here. Kapila shrugs that beasts do, and that he will never return to the city. Bhagavata tells him of his mother, and of Padmini's son. Kapila is expressionless but Bhagavata knows he is angry. Kapila simply walks away, and starts cutting a tree.

Padmini enters and espies him. They are transfixed by each other's appearance. Padmini says her son had never felt the wind on his cheeks or a thorn in his foot or seen the river, so she brought him out. Kapila says she should not have come so far, as it is dangerous. Padmini replies that hunters and villagers and pilgrims told her the safest way.

Kapila looks at the boy and asks if it is her son. She assents and says it is his too, as his body created it. He explodes in anger but then calms himself and says he is truly Kapila now.

The Bhagavata sings and Kapila asks if he can see the boy. He asks Padmini if she would like to sit, but she decides she does not need rest. When he asks how she is, she says she is well and has no illness. She tells him the boy has the same mole on his shoulder that he does. Kapila is surprised and does not know about his own mole; he does not look at this body much.

Padmini looks at him and asks why he has tortured his body so. He replies that it was once soft and a Brahmin's body, but it was difficult to be so weak and he used his mindpower to make his body do what he wanted it to do. Padmini sighs that the head must seemingly always win. Kapila agrees and says he has a head that fits his body.

Padmini remembers the song she sang in Kali's temple and muses that she has had four men in one lifetime. Kapila asks why she is here away from Devadatta. They freeze in discomfort.

Bhagavata says Devadatta changed slowly, not overnight, and Padmini must tell this to Kapila. But she does not, and all she says is she had to see him. He wishes she had not, especially just as he won this battle. He is now Kapila "without a crack between his head and his shoulders" (124). He orders and begs her to go back to her husband, the father of this child.

Padmini says she will if he wants her to, but she has a favor to ask, saying her son is tired and needs to rest a bit. And, she adds, he and Devadatta won—not her. It is her fault because she mixed the heads up, and she has suffered for it. She wishes she could stay and look at him and fill up for the rest of her life.

Kapila seems to not care about her despair, and says the damage has been done. He buried all the memories and now she has unearthed them. Padmini wonders why he must bury them at all, and he replies that he cannot tolerate "this mad dance of incompleteness" (126). He explains that he has beaten this body into shape but not its memories; he never knew a body has ghosts. His body recognized her touch just now but he has no memory of it, and this is terrible to him. She is sorry but he does not want her pity. Finally she caresses him and lays her head on his chest. They embrace and go inside his home.

Bhagavata sings of the river and its lack of memory, while the Female Chorus joins in to sing of the waterfall.

Devadatta enters with a sword and two dolls. He asks Bhagavata if Kapila lives here and Bhagavata is reluctant to reply. Devadatta asks how long "she" has been here and he says four or five days.

Devadatta has been wanting to taste the blood of his former friend, but now he stops before the hut. Kapila comes out and says he has been waiting for Devadatta. He is not fearful, only eager. They talk together, Kapila saying the body was not made for this life and resisted, but had its revenge. He explains that the body gave him new feelings to the extent that he even started writing poetry. They laugh and Devadatta says he wanted Kapila's "power but not your wildness" (129). He then asks if Kapila loves Padmini and Kapila replies yes. Devadatta says he does too. Kapila wonders if they could all live together but knows it cannot be done. Devadatta says this is why he brought the sword. Kapila goes to get his own.

Bhagavata says a crack has opened in the earth's face.

Kapila and Devadatta hold their swords before themselves. They know they both must die. They carry out a stylized fight, and Padmini comes to watch. Bhagavata sings as they wound each other and then finally die, collapsing. Padmini leans down to them and says they've "burned, lived, fought, embraced and died" (130). She wishes they could have lived together, but this was the only way.

Bhagavata asks her if he can help. She says that he needs to take the child away and give him to the hunters to raise him as Kapila's son. Then when he is five, he needs to go to the Brahman Vidysagara of Dharmapura and be raised as Devadatta's son. As for her, she will perform ***sati*** and die. She says to give the dolls to her son, and calls to Kali.

Padmini is on a palanquin covered with flowers. The flames consume her. The Female Chorus wishes her goodbye and says the Lord of Death will be pleased with her offering of three coconuts.

Bhagavata announces that she has become a *sati,* but no one knows where she carried this out. The hunters only point to the tree of the Fortunate Lady and say on the night of the new moon a song rises from the roots and the tree fills the air with fragrance.

Bhagavata notices Actor II rushing towards him. He is flustered, telling Bhagavata that he almost died from fright because he was coming down the road and he heard someone singing the National Anthem and assumed it was a true patriot, so he went to investigate. To his utter shock, he saw a horse singing. Before the Bhagavata can make sense of this, Actor I returns with a serious, sulky little boy of about five years old.

Bhagavata addresses Actor I, saying he was just thinking about him because of Hayavadana. Actor I says Hayavadana shooed him away as soon as they got to the Kali temple. Bhagavata asks who the child is but the boy does not reply.

The Actor sighs that children of his age should be "outtalking a dictionary" (134) but this boy won't even talk, let alone smile. Actor I was passing through a village of hunters when a woman came out with the child and gave it to him, saying it belonged in the city.

Bhagavata wonders at this, and reaches to touch the child's dolls. The child becomes incensed. Bhagavata has a glimmer of an idea as to who the child is, and asks to see his shoulder. The boy allows him, and Bhagavata triumphantly announces it is Padmini's son.

Actor II has been shouting, and finally Bhagavata heeds him. Actor II says he saw a full horse, not a horse-headed man like Bhagavata thought.

Suddenly a voice is heard, and Hayavadana appears. He is a full horse now. He happily greets Bhagavata and Actor I. They all laugh together and the little boy does as well, to their surprise.

Bhagavata asks what happened when he went to the goddess. Hayavadana explains that he went to the temple and proclaimed he would chop off his own head and the goddess, peevish, asked what he wanted. He said he wanted to be complete, so she made him a horse. He had not even finished speaking to Kali, but yes, now he is a complete ***horse,*** not a complete ***man.*** He wishes he could get rid of his human voice, and that is why he has been singing the National Anthem, since it seems like people who sing it ruin their voices. He begins to cry.

The boy tells him not to cry so Hayavadana stops, and says he will not give up trying. He tells the boy if he comes onto his back, he will sing a song he knows. Bhagavata puts the boy on the horse's back and begins a song at Hayavadana's request. It is a sad song, Hayavadana notes, but Bhagavata replies the beauty is in the child's laughter. Hayavadana disagrees and says this sentimentality has been "the bane of our literature and national life" because it promotes "escapism" (138).

The boy wants Hayavadana to laugh again, and as the horse dos so, he begins to lose his human voice and can only neigh. He leaps with joy and the child enjoys bouncing up and down on his back.

Bhagavata smiles that at last Hayavadana has become complete. He tells the Actors to tell the Brahmin his grandson is coming on a large white horse, and to throw away the dolls. He is happy with the fate of all, and thanks Ganesha for fulfilling dreams. It is time, he tells Hayavadana, to pray and thank the Lord for "having ensured the completion and success of our play" (139).

- ***Analysis***

The end of the prior act articulated the various arguments regarding the supremacy of the head or the body, but such arguments were rapidly shut down and ruled upon by the *rishi,* who stated, "As the heavenly Kalpa Vriksha is supreme among trees, so is the head among human limbs" (110), so Devadatta's head on Kapila's body is the "real" Devadatta and gets to go home with Padmini. This ruling is what Devadatta and Padmini want, and for a time they live in marital bliss. It seems as if Padmini in particular has everything she wants. However, the transposing of the heads brings with it unforeseen and strange realities—the bodies attached to the new heads start to revert back to what they once were. Whereas Devadatta initially enjoyed wrestling and his newfound strength, he eventually loses it all and returns to his slender, slightly flabby self. And as we learn in the next section, Kapila's weak body eventually reforms itself as strong and agile.

The way Karnad narrates these changes to Devadatta, as well as Padmini's growing distaste for him, is through the dolls. The dolls are extremely perceptive and act, Amara Khan suggests, as "psychological masks for Padmini just like the Female Chorus." Through them we learn she is dreaming of Kapila, and feel her "nuances of sexual repressions." They are "anti-naturalistic devices," William S. Haney writes, "that undermine the theatrical illusions commonly sustained in modern Western theater." Thus they are affiliated with the folk theatre tradition of *Yakshgara,* and their presence reinforces the disintegration of the characters in the second act; Karnad says, "[The dolls' interruptions are] done merely to bring out the disintegrated state of the three people's lives. In the first half everything is neat and clear, but in the second I wanted to create the impression of a reflection in a broken mirror—all fragmented, repetitious, out-of-focus, all bits and pieces."

So how do we understand what is happening to Devadatta and Kapila? Which really is more important—the head or the body? Both? Neither? William S. Haney believes the answer Karnad puts forth is neither, for the play demonstrates that "human identity extends beyond the materialism of the mind/body to include witnessing consciousness." Trying to identify with one or the other to the exclusion of its counterpart is frustrating, confusing, and ultimately fruitless.

It is impossible to separate head and body, and the reason why both men retain their sense of identity at all is because "their witnessing awareness [remains] unchanged, providing a sense of continuity to a shifting mind/body complex." This is because selfhood is both "the dynamic experience and instability of a constructed subject" and "a witnessing observer that never changes." Thus, "if the self is not an isolated, autonomous entity, neither is it a passive product of society. As a bimodal entity, the self assimilates, interprets and integrates the contents of one's cultural environment, while simultaneously witnessing that content from the unboundedness of pure awareness."

To further that assertion, Haney contends, regarding the Shastras claiming that the head is the sign of a man, as Devadatta uses in his argument to keep Padmini, "what the Shastras are referring to is not the mind as the home of intentional knowledge, but rather non-intentional consciousness and distinct from mind and body." The mind and body are both physical, so Devadatta returning to the body he once had, and the same thing happening to Kapila, "must

hinge on something beyond the mind/body complex, namely nonchanging consciousness." Ultimately, a socially constructed nature is an illusion, and when Padmini realizes this in her moments of lucidness, she knows she is engaged in a fruitless endeavor to fix either man as her ideal.

Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini's story comes to a tragic end, one that is not altogether unexpected given the unceasing and steadily growing tensions within their trio both before and after the transposition of heads. It appears that Devadatta and Kapila's heads imposed their will upon their bodies, transforming them back to what they once were, and leaving Padmini frustrated with her husband again and longing for Kapila. The insolubility of this problem necessitates drastic action through the characters' suicides and the relinquishment of the child to other guardians.

As aforementioned, it seems as though the heads have their way with the bodies and that indeed, the head is more powerful. Yet this is not the entire story, for, as Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker writes, "the original bodies also exert their own subversive power and change the heads indefinably." William S. Haney agrees, suggesting that Karnad wants us to see that "Both head and body…carry their own memories, and these memories define incompleteness by obstructing access to the void of conception." And Wendy Doniger also sees the play as arguing for the "somatic basis of memory" and how its emphasis on "body-memory over mind-memory is grounded in Indian philosophy…memory in India is located in the mind and in the body…[and] is sometimes located in the soul." Given this fragmentation, it is no wonder Devadatta and Kapila have difficulty figuring out who they are and why they are not complete.

It is Kapila that most eloquently articulates this somatic memory and incompleteness, bemoaning his new body's memories that derive from the old by asking Padmini, "Why should one tolerate this mad dance of incompleteness?" and then explaining "One beats the body into shape, but one can't beat away the memories in it. Isn't that surprising? That the body should have its own ghosts—its own memories? Memories of touch—memories of a touch—memories of a body swaying in these arms, of a warm skin against this palm—memories which one cannot recognize, cannot understand, cannot even name because this head wasn't there when they happened" (126). It pains Kapila that his new body recognizes Padmini's touch even though he never has, that "this body, this appendage, laughed and flowered out in a festival of memories to which I'm an outcaste" (126).

Kapila's hope of returning to some sense of his "real" self is thus thwarted by the body's recognition of Padmini's touch and how she "dug [the faceless memories] up with [her] claws" (126). There is no way for either Kapila or Devadatta to reach their selves because they have reverted back to their original, binary sense of identity—and with the added complication of having each other's somatic memories and "witnessing consciousness." As Haney notes, "To reach the Self, then, one has to be prepared to lose everything, as do Devadatta and Kapila."

With the conclusion of this main plot, Karnad leaves us with the overwhelming sense that hybridity and a unified identity through hybridity are not easy for humans to attain; even Padmini sees this when she sighs that "we are three," which Arya B.L. interprets to mean that Padmini "understands that she, Kapila, and Devadatta are the different manifestations of the same spirit. They never had individual existences."

Just as the audience thinks the play is over, Hayavadana makes his second appearance, similarly befuddling an actor and delighting Bhagavata. After his visit to Kali he ends up as a complete *horse,* not being able to finish articulating his request to be a complete *man,* and he desperately wants to lose his human voice so the completion can truly be finished. It is not until he meets the boy, who encourages him to laugh and sing and momentarily abandon his concern and discontent that he becomes a full horse. Whereas completeness was impossible for humans, it *is* possible for animals. Anand Mahadevan suggests that "Hayavadana and the boy in effect complete each other: the one, as a human child returned to the fold of society and the other, as fully animal."

In this last part of the second act, Karnad reminds us that there are different levels of reality here—that he is speaking to the real audience, that there are actors playing roles, and that there are two plots, which are now converging thanks to the appearance of Padmini's son in Hayavadana's story. Amara Khan sees the theatrical techniques as intended to "constantly [remind] the audience that they are watching a play and not a slice of life, resulting in some amount of distance between the play and the audience psychologically. Therefore, the audience is able to think over the play for themselves critically. The theme of incompleteness, embodied by Lord Ganesha, Hayavadana, Padmini, Devadatta, and Kapila requires that the audience analyze their own incompleteness and accept it as a fact of life [actions and scenes are stylized] so as to increase the awareness of the audience about the problems faced by the characters in the play." Karnad is not heavy-handed in his moralizing, but does suggest that his audience/reader meditate on how to embrace an identity that consists of both mind and body.

One of the most lauded aspects of the play is its fusion of Western and Indian elements. As discussed in the "About the Play" section, it is modeled heavily on Thomas Mann's version of a Sanskrit tale, and contains dramatic elements from both Western and Indian folk drama.

Khan locates this confluence in the moment of the play's conception—post-colonial, independent India—and writes, "although Hayavadana is certainly concerned with the conflict of Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of human nature and is strongly influenced by Mann's work in its exploration of this opposition, it is also a theater production in an India oscillating between its colonial past and its new independence within the framework of an over-arching tradition. Padmini represents the newly independent India, as yet unable to choose between tradition and its more recent Western history. Likewise, when the 'horse' Hayavadana sings the national anthem he evokes the empty regurgitation of nationalist feelings following independence. For Karnad the happy laughter that follows the reintegration of Padmini's boy within society is a crucial alternative to the idea of national pride. His characters finally seek happiness at whatever level of 'completeness' they are able to achieve rather than continue to seek one unified source of identity for themselves or the entire nation. When horses want to be men and women want brains and brawn in their husbands, then disappointment and disorder are in store. Resigning oneself to live as best one can in one's current circumstances is in Karnad's view the only road to happiness and contentment."

By the end of the play it should be clear that Hayavadana's story is not fully peripheral, not a throwaway plotline, and not just for laughs—it is central to Karnad's message regarding identity. Mohit K. Ray points out that the title of the play is, indeed, *Hayavadana,* not *Devadatta and Kapila.* It is the horse-man's story that "raises the identity question more dramatically and more authentically than anybody else in the play," and the subplot allows Karnad to look at the problem both at "the metaphysical level and at the socio-cultural level…[he] handles the moral problem in the main plot and the philosophical problem in the subplot." Hayavadana has consulted saints and magicians and *fakirs,* threw himself into patriotism, and lived a blameless life, but none of that could help him find completeness. Now that he is a complete horse and a unified being at the end, he can, Nand Kumar writes, take in the "responsibility by the Bhagavata" to tell the Brahmin that his grandson is coming home and that Ganesha offers "unfathomable mercy" and the fulfillment of those who worship him. Because of their flaws, the humans Devadatta and Kapila could not achieve completeness, but Hayavadana could as a horse and Ganesha could in his hybridity—thus we ought to heed the examples of the divine and the animal to learn how to live fully in our humanity.