



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

## B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

### Hayavadana Character List

#### Ø Bhagavata

A Bhagavata in Hinduism is a worshiper; in this case he is also the play's narrator and he gives the audience a synopsis of the characters' lives before the start of the play. He is able to talk to the characters during the play and he also reacts to what is happening, especially when he does not approve of one particular course of action or another. He is often more of an observer than the narrator because he is also surprised and taken aback by much of what happens. His symbolic role in the play is to show the audience how unpredictable life can sometimes be.

#### Ø Devadatta

One of the play's two main protagonists, Devadatta is a fair and slender man who is smart as a whip. His father is a Brahmin and he is both poet and political observer. He is close friends with Kapila at the start and the end of the play but feels a great deal of jealousy when he sees that there is a mutual attraction between Kapila and Padmini. Ironically, he becomes more jealous after he is married to Padmini and still sees his erstwhile friend as a rival.

When his head is put back on Kapila's body he feels that he has the best of both worlds, because he has combined his wit with Kapila's strength, and he has Padmini. However, eventually he body starts to become what it used to be and he is swiftly returned to his soft, flabby form again, which leaves him feeling dissatisfied and grumpy. He and Kapila kill themselves in solidarity at the end.

#### Ø Kapila

A muscular, dark man, Kapila is the son of an ironsmith, and he is the brawn to Devaratta's brains. He is a man of courage and he has great daring and a sense of adventure. He is a far better friend than Devadatta gives him credit for; he talks to Padmini on his friend's behalf even though it is clear to him that they are a mismatch. He also cuts off his own head in solidarity with Devadatta when he finds his decapitated body. When Padmini chooses to remain with Devadatta's head on Kapila's body, Kapila goes into the forest and withdraws from society. He gradually regains his former fitness and physique but he realizes that this is a hollow, half-existence. He and Devadatta kill themselves in solidarity at the end.

#### Ø Padmini

Padmini is a beautiful young woman who is the object of desire of both Devadatta and Kapila. She chooses Devadatta because she is attracted by his intelligence but she comes to realize that her sharp tongue is too much for his sensitive nature. She is also very attracted to the physicality of Kapila.

Although it is a complete accident when she puts the wrong heads back on the wrong bodies, it does seem that Padmini is now able to have her cake and eat it too, because she gets the mind that she adores atop the body she craves. This is only fleeting, though, because when the bodies of the men start to readjust back to the way they used to be, she is quickly dissatisfied with her lot again.



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Padmini is left alone twice by the men, as they kill themselves and leave her twice. The second time she kills herself too, having been dissuaded from doing so the first time around by the goddess Kali.

### Ø Hayavadana

Oddly, while the eponymous character in the play, Hayavadana does not appear that much and is not the protagonist. He is a man with the head of a horse—or a horse with the body of a man, depending on your perspective, born from a woman who married a horse and bore his son. He wants desperately to be made complete, which he defines as being a full man. At the narrator's suggestion, he asks Kali to bless him with this but we find out that although she acceded to his request to be made whole, she elected to make him all *horse* rather than all man. He is joyful when his human voice, the last vestige of his humanity, fades away at the end.

### Ø Kali

Kali is the Hindu goddess of death and she appears to most of the characters during the play. Devadatta sacrifices his head to her, and she does receive both men in the end but only because Padmini has put the wrong heads on the wrong bodies and intense suffering ensued. Padmini also addresses her when she burns herself on the funeral pyre. Kali makes Hayavadana a "complete" horse but in doing so demonstrates the perception that the Hindu gods don't really pay attention and can create as much havoc as good.

### Ø Dolls #1 and #2

The dolls are snarky, mischievous, rude, selfish, and prideful creatures. They narrate what is happening to Devadatta and Padmini through the birth of their son, Padmini's dreams of Kapila, and more.

### Ø Actor #1

This actor is the first to be shocked by the horse-man Hayavadana. He is tasked by Bhagavata to take Hayavadana to Kali's temple. He also ends up with the child when he passes through a hunters' village and they give him the boy, saying he no longer belongs there.

### Ø Actor #2

This actor is frightened by Hayavadana singing the National Anthem.

### Ø Child

The child is the son of Padmini and Devadatta, given to be raised by hunters until he is five, and then Devadatta's father, the Revered Brahmin. He is silent and surly, and only begins to use his voice when he laughs at Hayavadana.

## Hayavadana Themes

### Ø Hybridity

One of the main themes of the play is that of creatures that are hybrids of different things; the title character, [Hayavadana](#), is a hybrid of a man and a horse, and even [Kapila](#) and [Devadatta](#) end



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up being hybrids of each other. At the start of the play, being a hybrid is something godly and special; the opening prayer is to Ganesha, a god who is a boy with the head of an elephant. He is the lord and master of perfection which is paradoxical given his appearance. However, as the play continues, the hybrid characters seem less and less perfect to themselves and all ultimately feel that they are incomplete because they are not fully one creature or another.

### Ø Incompleteness

The theme of being incomplete is personified by all of the characters. Devadatta and Kapila are brain and brawn respectively, but neither feels truly complete. This is mirrored by [Padmini](#); she chooses to take Devadatta as her husband but she still finds herself longing for the physicality of Kapila. She feels incomplete because she has been abandoned twice by the same two men, which emphasizes her own incompleteness to her.

Devadatta and Kapila feel a sense of incompleteness after they have each other's bodies joined to their own heads. At first it seems that Devadatta gets the best deal because he gets to keep his own sharp mind, and also has the muscular physique of Kapila. Kapila has his own strength of mind but has Devadatta's soft, unathletic body. He begins to feel incomplete as soon as the switch has occurred; however, when both men start to find that their bodies are returning to their prior state, they still both feel incomplete because they realize that they are living half existences.

The most obvious example of incompleteness is Hayavadana, who wants nothing more than to be made complete. He wants to be made fully a man but [Kali](#) makes him fully a horse instead. Even when she does so he feels incomplete because he still has the voice of a man. When he is able to change this and achieve the "neigh" of a horse instead he finally feels that he is complete.

### Ø Conflict Between Body and Mind

The play engages with the question of which is more powerful, the body or the mind. By all accounts it is the mind, as shown in Hayavadana, Devadatta, and Kapila's experiences, but Karnad also suggests the body has more power than one might initially assume. The body has memory, memory that stubbornly resists the mind's desire to sublimate it. The body's physical engagement with the world leaves a residue within, and when considering this as well as the putative supremacy of the mind, one must consider the two parts as near equals and both important to the formation of a complete identity.

### Ø Women's Subversiveness

Padmini might be a wife and mother, as traditional Indian society would dictate, but she is not complacent, quiet, or docile. She is a desiring, sensual woman who pursues what—or who—she wants. She is openly selfish and independent-minded, something that the goddess Kali admires. Karnad allows her subversiveness to come through both her own words and those of the Female Chorus, which articulates her discontent with her conjugal life. Her sharp tongue and subtle subversiveness make her much more than a subaltern; rather, she is the closest to "complete" of all the characters.

### Ø City vs. Nature

Devadatta represents the city, a place dedicated to commerce and to the pursuits of the mind, not the body. The woods are associated with Kapila in that they are a place where the physical body feels most at home, most complete. Nature is not *opposed* to the intellect, but it values strength,



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perseverance, and resilience; there the currency is not money but physical power. Padmini is a woman of the city but increasingly drawn to the woods, which represents her desire for both Devadatta and Kapila. Her son is naturally of both places, though, being raised in one and then the other, which suggests his identity will be more complete.

### Ø Theatre and Its Conventions

Karnad plays with the different levels of reality and drama throughout the piece. [Bhagavata](#) asks Ganesha for a blessing and speaks of the play's beginning, which is then interrupted by an Actor and Hayavadana. This *is* part of the play, though we are supposed to think it is not, and following it Bhagavata segues into a completely different story. A chorus and Bhagavata comment on the action, the latter speaking to and about the audience occasionally. And at the end, the two seemingly disparate plots suddenly converge, all done in a way to make the audience reflect on the didactic nature of theatre, the fusion *and* fragmentation of drama and real life, and the nature of storytelling.

### Ø Indian Identity

Karnad alludes to post-colonial India's identity problems through his characters, especially Hayavadana. After British rule, Indians were left with the vestiges of colonial politics, education, social structures, and more, which existed alongside and in tension with traditional Indian ones. Indians wrestled with their varying degrees of participation within the colonial system, and now in its vacuum had to come to terms with their fractured identity. By having Hayavadana try—and fail—to find completeness in purely Indian patriotic behavior, Karnad suggests how difficult this period is for his nation.

## Hayavadana Symbols, Allegory and Motifs

### Ø Switching Heads (Motif)

The motif of switching heads is pivotal to the themes of incompleteness and of hybridism. The first character that Bhagavat introduces is the god Ganesha who has the head of an elephant and the body of a child. The next character that the audience meets in person is Hayavadana, who has the body of a man and the head of a horse.

At first, the two male protagonists have their own heads correctly connected to their own bodies, but after an excitable Padmini makes an error and puts each man's head on the other's body by mistake, they, too, have a body and a head that does not belong together. This motif is followed all the way through the play until the end, when Hayavadana does reach a stage of completeness thanks to the help of both Kali and the little boy who is the son of Padmi and Davadatta.

### Ø The Flower (Symbol)

The Fortunate Lady flower that Kapila shows to Padmini is a symbol *of* Padmini, though the flower's name is ironic since she certainly is not that fortunate. The flower has the marks of a married woman, such as the dot on the forehead, the parting of the hair, and a necklace. It is



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beautiful and beguiling, sensual and redolent just like a woman. At the end of the play Bhagavata tells the audience that the Fortunate Lady flower tree sends up a lovely scent and song on the night of the full moon, reminiscent of Padmini and her tragic, glorious death for love.

### Ø Dreams (Motif)

Dreams occur multiple times throughout the text, particularly in relation to Padmini. It is in her dreams that the audience/reader finds a fuller understanding of how she really feels about Devadatta and Kapila. They are where she indulges in her most sensual and, in the eyes of traditional, patriarchal Indian society, forbidden desires.

### Ø Dolls (Symbol)

Dolls are traditionally seen as symbols of childhood. They are toys, faint replicas of children themselves, intended to teach the skills of nurturing and sympathy. In this play they are associated with the child, purchased near the time of his birth and then kept until they are replaced by new ones later. However, Karnad turns the symbol on its head a bit by making these dolls very much alive, not to mention catty, cruel, and selfish. This doesn't necessarily reflect upon the child as much as it does his parents, the ones who brought the dolls into the home.

### Ø Padmini's Door (Symbol)

There is a two-headed bird above Padmini's door, which symbolizes her split when it comes to Devadatta and Kapila. She finds it difficult to reconcile her desire for Kapila's body and Devadatta's brain, and since both men are so entrenched in their incompleteness, she cannot make any headway in determining to be with only one of them.

## Ø Hayavadana Metaphors and Similes

### Ø Devadatta (Metaphor)

Bhagavata explains, "Comely in appearance, fair in colour, unrivalled in intelligence, Devadatta is the only son of the Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara. Having felled the mightiest pundits of the kingdom in debates on logic and love, having blinded the greatest poets of the world with his poetry and wit, Devadatta is as it were the apple of every eye in Dharmapura" (73-74). The metaphor of Devadatta as the "apple of every eye," which means he is highly esteemed (the idiom derived from "aperture," or pupil), is one that lets the reader/audience see that the residents in Dharmapura adulate Devadatta unconditionally due to his appealing attributes and intelligence. They consider him a source of pride for the entire city; his respect from the city dwellers is outstanding and unconditional.

### Ø Lives and Roads (Metaphor)

Bhagavata explains, "So the roads diverged. Kapila went into the forest and disappeared. He never saw Dharmapura again. In fact he never felt the wind of any city again. As for Devadatta and Padmini, they returned to Dharmapura and plunged into the joys of married life" (111). The metaphorical, poetic "roads" indicate the different courses which the lives of the two friends take. They aren't real roads per se, but two diverging lives—one with Padmini, one without; one in the city, one in the woods.



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### Ø Padmini (Simile)

Devadatta is besotted with Padmini, and describes her beauty with a simile of light: she is "as stars before the moon, as the glow-worms before a torch" (83). She is the moon, so bright she dims the stars; she is a flaming torch, so bright she mutes the glow-worms. These similes show Devadatta's poetic tendencies and his esteem for Padmini.

### Ø Kapila (Metaphor)

Kapila is so overcome by Padmini's beauty and wit and sharp tongue that he moans, "I'm finished—decimated—powdered to dust—powdered into tiny specks of flour" (89). These metaphors of Kapila being ground down like flour or crushed into dust reveal how impressed and gobsmacked he is by this woman before him. He cannot muster any wit or repartee or command to deal with her, only weakly asking for her mother.

### Ø Padmini (Simile)

As with the above metaphor, Kapila is keenly aware of how witty and piquant and sassy Padmini is. He wonders if she is actually too much for the poetic Devadatta, thinking, "But this one is as fast as lightning—and as sharp" (90). Devadatta is a scholar, a poet, a rich man—perhaps the sensual and clever Padmini will overwhelm him, Kapila wonders—and she does.

## Hayavadana Irony

### Ø Vighneshwara's Perfection - Act 1

Bhagavata states, "May Vighneshwara, the destroyer of obstacles, who removes all hurdles and crowns all endeavours with success, bless our performance now. How indeed can one hope to describe his glory in our poor, disabled words? An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and cracked belly—whichever way you look at him he seems the embodiment of perfection, of incompleteness. How indeed can one fathom the mystery that this very Vakratunda-Mahakaya, with his crooked face and distorted body, is the Lord and Master of Success and Perfection?" (74). Vighneshwara's physical form does not depict the perfection which he is believed to foster. The ironic divergence between his appearance and power to facilitate perfectionism underscores his mysticism which is beyond mortals' comprehension. The mortals' perception of perfection is divergent from Vighneshwara's.

### Ø Theatre Critic

Actor I says this of the silent child: "See? No response—no reactions. When he grows up he should make a good theatre critic" (134). This snarky comment is ironic because a theatre critic is supposed to have responses and reactions—after all, this is what they are paid to do. Here, Actor I is suggesting that theatre critics are dull and lame, lacking reactions and responses yet still somehow being lauded for their "effort." A silent child, a theatre critic—they are one and the same.

### Ø The Audience



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Bhagavata says this twice: "And there is our large-hearted audience. It may be that they fall asleep during a play sometimes" (75). It is gently ironic, poking fun at how theatre audiences can sometimes grow bored or weary with the drama unfolding before them on the stage. They are "large-hearted," meaning they are kind and hospitable, but at the same time they can nod off and not heed the work of the actors. This is an irony, but one with relatively low stakes.

### Ø Strangers

When Kapila comes to Padmini's door to woo her for Devadatta, she engages him in a battle of wits (which she wins handily). She piques him and makes him uncomfortable with her wit, asking him to touch her feet and then saying ironically, "I knew it. I knew you wouldn't touch my feet. One can't even trust strangers any more" (89). Of course, one should never (or rarely) trust strangers, but Padmini says this to mess with Kapila's head, for he is obviously kind but not very intelligent. Her irony here demonstrates her salient wit.

## Hayavadana Imagery

### Ø Hayavadana

Hayavadana is, first, a horse's head on a man's body, and thus strange, terrifying, grotesque, and amusing. This image runs parallel to the evocation of Ganesha, also an animal head (elephant) and a human body (a boy). This may indicate that we humans do not necessarily understand how everything in the universe should work and what perfection and completeness actually are. It also foreshadows the transposed heads of Kapila and Padmini, and is thus an important image all around.

### Ø The "Forest Fair"

Padmini states, "my poor child, you haven't seen the witching fair of the dark forest, have you? Let's go and see it. How can I describe it to you? There's so much. Long before the sun rises, the shadow of twigs draw *alpanas* on the floor. The stars raise *arati* and go. Then the day dawns and the fun begins. The circus in the tree-tops and the cock-fights in a shower of feathers. And the dances! The Tiger-dance, and the peacock dance, and the dance of the sun's little feet with silver anklets on the river. In the heart of the forest stands the stately chariot of the shield bearer. It is made of pure gold—rows of birds pull it down the street, and rows of flames of the forest salute it with torches" (121-122). The fair is absolutely enthralling and impressive. Main participants are the animals which predominantly inhabit the forests. Each animal plays a distinct role which makes the fairs a success. Trees offer an ideal ambiance for the fair to proceed. Dancing depicts the animals' happiness which comes from having a serene environment where they can conduct their affairs far from the interference of humans; this is the world Padmini yearns for at this point in her life.

### Ø Head and Body

Throughout the latter part of the play the audience is consistently faced with images of head and body—sometimes familiar in their fusion, sometimes unfamiliar. This forces us to consider the



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dichotomy between head and body, consider which is more powerful, and ponder how identity is constructed.

### Ø Kali

Kali is presented first as a "terrifying figure, her arms stretched out, her mouth wide open with the tongue lolling out" (101), but Karnad swiftly inverts this image and reveals that she is actually yawning. It is a play on the traditional view of the goddess, and an amusing image of how silly and inconsequential the affairs of humans are to her. There will be divine intervention in the characters' lives, but they're really their own worst enemies—not the gods.

### Hayavadana Theatre of Roots

The Theatre of Roots, of which [Girish Karnad](#) was a practitioner, was a type of Indian drama that flourished after independence from British rule in 1947. The dramatists wished to create works of theater that reached back to their "roots," as opposed to highly Westernized and colonial-era drama. Thus, playwrights and directors such as Karnad, K.N. Panikkar, and Ratan Thiyam incorporated classical dance, religion, Sanskrit aesthetic theory, martial arts, and folk and myth traditions.

The resulting body of work was in a middle ground between modern European theatre and traditional Indian performance, taking care to distinguish itself from both. Director M.K. Raina explained, "We are not going back to tradition...we are in the process of creating new thinking, new sensibilities, and therefore new forms. Perhaps the fusion of some of the traditional forms and contemporary struggles may give birth to vital new forms, representative of contemporary Indian reality." Critic Suresh Awasthi says these artists "have reversed the colonial course of contemporary theatre, putting it back on the track of the great Natyasastra tradition. It sounds paradoxical, but their theatre is both avant-garde in the context of conventional realistic theatre, and part of the 2,000-year-old Natyasastra tradition. Natyasastra's survival is strikingly marked in the art of the actor, in the use of music and dance in realizing the performance text, in a whole set of conventions for treating time and space, and in the overall design and structure of a performance."

In the post-Independence era, theatre directors and writers were concerned that modern theatre was completely cut off from the past and from folk and traditional theatre; thus, a goal of theirs was to bridge the gap between rural areas, where such traditions remained within the arts, and urban areas, where they had largely been elided. The choice to focus on Indian literary and dramatic classics was a concerted one, for as Awasthi notes, "These classics preserve the utterances and behavior of a whole era. Their words and images strike many Indians as overwhelmingly pertinent. Their interpretations in these productions give them contemporaneity and relevance; but the pressure to be relevant does not wipe out or annul the sense of history that they preserve. There can be no such thing as relevance of classics objectively determined. Relevance is subjective; it emerges from a particular director's theatrical vision." However, "these productions...have been greeted with suspicion by purists, literary scholars, and historians of theatre who often raise the question of 'authenticity' in regard to the classics. But authenticity of style is a self-defeating objective. It negates the very purpose of doing a classic, which by its very nature lends itself to different interpretations and approaches in accordance with contemporary tastes and values of theatre practice."





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Stylistically, linear narrative is complicated by multiple voices, and, as Gitanjali Bhatia explains, there was “the rejection of proscenium stage [as] one part of the overall rejection of the western idiom in favour of a native one,” “plot and characterization became secondary and the actor became more important than the character,” “the emphasis was shifted more to performance while text-based western dramaturgy took a back seat,” and “the dramatists looked for models in their cultural past.” Theatre of Roots directors were extremely concerned with form, always a part of the Indian dramatic tradition. They were also tasked with bringing out the full potential of the actor, even as their own role remained powerful.

A Swarthmore reviewer of Erin B. Mee’s renowned work, *The Theatre of Roots: Redirecting the Modern Indian Stage* (2008), writes of the subject, “By addressing the politics of aesthetics, and by challenging the visual practices, performer/spectator relationships, dramaturgical structures and aesthetic goals of colonial performance, the movement offered a strategy for reassessing colonial ideology and culture and for articulating and defining a newly emerging 'India.’”

### Hayavadana Literary Elements

#### Ø Genre

Drama

#### Ø Setting and Context

Dharmapura, India

#### Ø Narrator and Point of View

As this is a play, it uses third-person limited, although Bhagavata speaks to the mindset of others.

#### Ø Tone and Mood

Tone: lively, questioning, anxious

Mood: playful, apprehensive, confining

#### Ø Protagonist and Antagonist

The protagonists/antagonists are Devadatta and Kapila.

#### Ø Major Conflict

There is conflict between the two friends when Devadatta realizes that Kapila is attracted to Padmini. There is also conflict after their heads have been put on the wrong bodies; both feel that they are the logical choice for Padmini to be with moving forward and both argue their points with the other.

#### Ø Climax

The men kill each other and Padmini commits sati on a funeral pyre because she realizes she feels incomplete on her own.

#### Ø Foreshadowing

Bhagavata foreshadows the friends' transposed heads and Hayavadana with his early paean to Ganesha, a god with an elephant head and a boy's body.

#### Ø Understatement



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Bhagavata says that he is surprised to see the Hayavadana character walking onto the stage, which is an understatement since this figure is a man with the head of a horse; surprise is far too calm of a term to describe this reaction.

### Ø Allusions

1. Hindu gods and goddesses (Ganesha, Rudra, Kali), as well as Hindu social and religious rituals (pooja, namaskara, sati)
2. The Shastras—the sacred Hindu books (106)
3. Pandavas and Draupadi (129): husband and wife in the Hindu epic "Mahabharata"

### Ø Imagery

The most conspicuous imagery is that of the masks and bodies to which they are attached, and the switching that takes place frequently. With this, Karnad is commenting on the problems with identity, such as the dichotomy between the head and the body.

### Ø Paradox

1. At the start of the play, the god Ganesha, who is a boy with the head of an elephant, is said to be the god of perfection and success. He is also the embodiment of this. This is a paradox because he is a hybrid of two creatures, and the other characters in the play find an incompleteness in being a hybrid that does not suggest perfection or success at all.

### Ø Parallelism

1. The bodies that belong to the new heads parallel each other in their return to the head's original bodily form.
2. Padmini's initial lapse in affection for Devadatta is paralleled by her later lapse in affection for him.

### Ø Personification

1. "And the head is bidding good-bye to the heart" (95)
2. "The wrong road stuck to my feet—wouldn't let it go" (123)
3. "...this body, this appendage, laughed and flowered out in a festival of memories to which I'm an outcaste" (126)
4. "it [the body] wasn't made for this life. It resisted. It also had its revenge" (128)

## Hayavadana Quotes and Analysis

○ single-tusked destroyer of incompleteness, we pay homage to you and start our play.

Bhagavata, p. 73



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At the start of the play, before there is any explanation of plot, or introduction of characters, Bhagavata, the narrator, offers a prayer to Ganesha, the god seen to be the exemplar of perfection and success. The fact that they are thanking him for ridding the world of the incomplete suggests that he is seen as complete himself. This is a paradox, because he is not complete at all; he is the head of an elephant on the body of a man, neither creature being complete. He is also the opposite of the characters in that he is considered perfect and complete, while they, hybrids like him, feel that they are anything but.

Bhagavata: Hayavadana, what's written on our foreheads cannot be altered.

Hayavadana: But what a forehead! What a forehead! If it was a forehead like yours, I would have accepted anything. But this!

### Bhagavata and Hayavadana, p. 80

Bhagavata contends that it is foolish of Hayavadana to try to become a man because his fate was written long ago and it is something that cannot be changed. In response, Hayavadana makes a joke out of what Bhagavata has told him. He plays on words to make the point that if he already had the forehead of a man, he would take whatever the fates held in store for him; he cannot do that because he does not feel that he did anything in his life to warrant being rendered equine, and so he feels that it is not really his correct fate at all. He feels incomplete and knows that this is something he is not going to be able to accept, hence his desire to do something about it.

...I've tried them all. Magicians, mendicants, maharshis, fakirs, saints and sadhus...

### Hayavadana, p. 81

Hayavadana lists the people he's visited in order to find a solution to his problem as an oblique way of questioning the power of the gods. This is a contemporary play, after all, and even though Hindu gods and goddesses are addressed and/or appear in a brief cameo, Hayavadana's words suggest that so-called holy men and spiritual advisers do not have the ability to enact real change or ameliorate suffering. On the other hand, it's Kali who changes him into a complete horse, so perhaps the adjustment should be that the humans who claim to represent the will and teachings and power of the gods are as enfeebled as all the rest of humanity, and we ought to be more suspicious of their putative chicanery.

I swear, Kapila, with you as my witness I swear, if I ever get her as my wife, I'll sacrifice my two arms to the goddess Kali, I'll sacrifice my head to Lord Rudra...

### Devadatta, p. 85

When Devadatta utters these words in his rhapsodic account of Padmini's beauty and his overwhelming desire to possess her, it's likely that most members of the audience/readers will



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see them as mere hyperbole and a source of amusement, not as an indication of what is actually to come. But while Devadatta doesn't lose his arms to Kali, he certainly does lose his head, and remembrance of this assertion adds a bit of irony and humor to what is, in some respects, a tragic response to Devadatta's perceived loss of Padmini to his best friend.

*You spoke the truth because you're selfish—that's all.*

*Kali, p. 103*

Kali appears to Padmini and allows her to "fix" her problem by letting her replace the men's heads, and says she does this, as the quote indicates, because she is amused by Padmini's selfishness. While we normally wouldn't see selfishness as a positive thing, it is here an example of Padmini's honesty and authenticity. Sure, she isn't a good wife to Devadatta, but she's open with what she wants. She does not tamp down her sharp tongue or her desire, and this is refreshing to Kali, who expresses in her languid, dull tone and expression that she's seen and heard everything under the sun and Padmini is at least something different.

*Who ever looks hard at a person he sees every day?*

*Kapila, p. 106*

For not being the most clever man, Kapila here offers a succinct and significant statement of humans' tendency to take for granted what is always right before them. The people we see every day are ones who are, theoretically, the most important people in our lives, but at some point we seem to look at them less closely, listen to them less acutely, regard them less seriously. Familiarity breeds, if not contempt, at least complacency. This acknowledgment of this very human trait helps explain why Kapila and Devadatta can return to their household and society (though Kapila chooses not to) without people noticing they've changed much.

*Of all human limbs the topmost—in position as well as importance—is the head.*

*Devadatta, p. 107*

Devadatta makes this argument in order to explain why he should be with Padmini, and it's one that is echoed in other characters' comments and references in the text. Clearly, the head exercises a large degree of control over the body, as will be made abundantly clear when Devadatta and Kapila's bodies return to the shape that matches the head to which they're attached. However, the head's powers do not obviate those of the body, which exercise their will over the head in indefinable, fleeting ways (such as Kapila "remembering" touching Padmini), nor do they take supremacy over the "witnessing consciousness" of the lived experience that derives from both head *and* body. Thus, fragmentation of head and body and claims of the former's supremacy are not entirely accurate.

*Six months—and not a soul has come near us.*



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

## B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

Six months—and not a hand has touched us.

Dolls, p. 115

The dolls are amusing characters in their viciousness and selfishness, but they are not merely present for comic relief. Karnad brings them in as ways to demonstrate the passage of time. Here in this quote we see the dolls mention that six months have passed since they were last played with, meaning that the child was born six months ago. Karnad will also use the dolls to comment on what is happening to Devadatta—his body is losing its strength and returning to its slender, flabby scholar form—and Padmini—her attraction to Devadatta is waning and she is dreaming more and more of Kapila. Using non-traditional forms of narration via non-human characters is a folk theatre technique, which strips away a level of realism from the play and thus fosters the audience's ability to distance themselves from the characters and the action and hopefully ruminate more on the overall message of the play.

I have become a complete horse—but not a complete being! This cursed human voice—it's still there! How can I call myself complete? If only I could!

Hayavadana, p. 136

What this quote articulates is that Hayavadana would rather be complete even as an animal rather than be incomplete as a half-animal, half-man. And it is easier for an animal to be "complete" because the distinction between head and body is almost irrelevant. Yet for humans, this is a much more difficult prospect, and one that Devadatta and Kapila find impossible.

Why should love stick to the sap of a single body...why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower?

Female Chorus, p. 82

The Female Chorus asks as the "mask" for Padmini. It gives voice to her longings, articulates the difficulties with her societal position, and offers sympathy for her plight as a woman in a patriarchal society. It does not speak often but when it does it says this same basic message as quoted above, which uses metaphor to question why a woman cannot love two men, and why she should be content to bind herself to one. It is a subversive message, yes, but the usage of the Female Chorus tempers this subversiveness a bit, perhaps making it more palatable to a wider audience.