

Female Consciousness in GirishKarnad's Hayavadana

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Abstract

It is a fact universally acknowledged that Literature deals with the values of life. Every nation has its own Literature to reflect its culture. Indian Literature is a reflection on Indian sensibility. Indian Literature is rich in its themes. GirishKarnad occupies a very great position in the annals of Indian Literature. He is a prolific writer. He takes inordinate interest in delving deep into Indian mythology. Though he is a great lover of mythology, he develops an abiding interest in Feminism. Some of his works astutely reflect Feminism. This paper entitled "Female Consciousness in GirishKarnad's *Hayavadana*", analyses the female consciousness in Patriarchal society through the defense mechanisms.

Keywords

Phallocentric; substitute gratification; patriarchal societies

Peter Barry comments in his *Beginning Theory* that, “This distinction is what Simone de Beauvoir invokes in the famous first sentence in part two of *The Second Sex* (1949) when she writes ‘One is not born a woman; rather, one becomes a woman’. The project of Beauvoir’s book is one which *Sexual Politics* sees itself as continuing” (130).

Mitchell defends Freud that he does not present the feminine as something simply ‘given and natural’. Female sexuality is not just there ‘naturally’ from the start, but is formed by early experiences and adjustments. Freud shows how female sexuality is being produced and constructed in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Jane Gallop in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (1982) switches from the Freudian to the Lacanian variety, partly because what is often implicit in Freud is explicit in Lacan’s system, namely the phallus is not the physical and biological object, but a symbol of the power, which goes with it.

The absence of phallus in woman gives context to all the institutions which are the products of their centre. Cultures and individuals stick to different complex rules and behaviour by appealing to different world views, but doing the right thing in the right eyes of the society unite them for which the phallogocentric

institutions such as language, culture, marriage, religion, morality, ethics and so on are authoritarians. When phallus gives the meaning to masculine world, the desire of the object, which is absent, gives meaning to non-masculine world or the female world. The male mind, which creates the phallogocentric world, keeps the female under its control, which are primarily due to their biology and psychology.

When Girish Karnad wrote *Hayavadana*, he was very much aware of Lacanian ideas.

“BHAGAVADA: Each one to his own fate. Each one to his own desire. Each one to his own lack” (Act I, 2). This is the key lines which talks about the characters. Dhanavel’s interpretation is controversial to Lacan’s who does not believe in ego psychologists’ idea that ego which makes subject, selfhood and personality, when the laws, on the other hand, enter in the form of language; the child’s life is divided into two – the pre-natal stage and oedipal stage. There language makes division in the mind; therefore, his desire is repressed into the Id. The desire is the signifier. The desire to reach the pre-oedipal stage is the signified. The signified becomes in signified or unaccomplished in his lifetime. According to Lacan, “Language delivers us not to life but to death. Drives

which elevate this life to language make much of place for that which, in terms of somatic support, signifies death” (Maccannell 52). Death refers to the death of the pre-natal stage. This fragmented nature causes not only gender difference but also social difference.

The ideas, emotions, and feelings take the forms such as sublimation, association, condensation, displacement, substitute gratification, scapegoat mechanism, symbolism, and Para praxis, because the repressed material has to find outlet. Sublimation is a process in which the repressed material is promoted into something grander or is disguised as something ‘noble’. In addition, the sublimated material is no more a taboo in the society, but is put on the pedestal. Association is a mechanism in which the idea that is associated with the repressed material, which is not a taboo, is projected to the foreground. Condensation is a process, whereby a number of people, events, meanings and ideas are combined or compressed into a single symbol or image, which is socially acceptable. In the process of displacement, another represents a person, idea or event, which is in some way linked or associated with it. Substitute gratification is a process in which the forbidden, mainly libidinal wishes, which come by the superego, but

are permitted by the superego to achieve a sense of satisfaction in, disguised forms. This fantasized wish fulfillment gives solace and consolation. In scapegoat mechanism, the feelings and emotions towards a particular entity, which is forbidden by the society, are expressed and the repressed feeling and emotions are projected on another entity, which has no connection to the former entity. Symbolism is the representation of repressed mainly sexual objects of desire by nonsexual objects which resemble them or are associated with them in prior experience. Para praxis is a mechanism in which the repressed material in the unconscious finds and outlet through the slips of the tongue slips of the pen and unintended actions. Para praxis is otherwise called as Freudian slip.

GirishKarnad’s play Hayavadana deals with the problem of completeness. Even in the very beginning of the play, Karnad states the problem of Bhagavatathrough the character. Bhagavata says that Lord Ganesh, who has elephant’s head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly, is the embodiment of imperfection and of incompleteness. Yet the Lord and Master of Success and Perfection is the embodiment of imperfection. Bhagavata in the play Hayavadana acts as that of

narrator and director of the play. He describes the relationship between Devadatta and Kapila, who excel in their respective fields with no one as their equal as that of brothers. Bhagavata compared their relationship to that of Lava and Kusha, Rama and Lakshmana, Krishna and Balarama, the mythical brothers of Hindu Mythology.

BHAGAVATA. ...One is Devadatta. Comely in appearance, fair in colour, unrivalled in intelligence, Devadatta is the only son of the Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara. The other youth is Kapila. He is the only son of the iron-smith Lohita, who is to the king's armoury as an axle to the chariotwheel. He is dark and plain to look at, yet in deeds which require drive and daring, in dancing, in strength and in physical skills, he has no equal. The world wonders at their friendship. The world sees these two young men wandering down the streets of Dharmapura, hand in hand, and remembers Lava and Kusha, Rama and Lakshmana, Krishna and Balarama. (Act I, 2)

Devadatta sees a girl in PavanaVeethi and her beauty captivates him. He thinks that without her, his life has no meaning and he swears in the presence of Kapila that he would sacrifice both his arms to Goddess Kali and his

head to Lord Rudra. He says that his poetry would not live without her.

Devadatta gets obsessed with Padmini and her beauty. His obsession has no boundary because he goes to the extent of thinking her to be more superior to his profession. He says that his profession of writing poetry would not live without her. He becomes hysterical because he could not find the means to communicate with her. He poetically says that he has no cloud for a messenger or a bee to lead him. He is totally mesmerized by her beauty therefore he never watched the colour of her house or the number of stories it had. Kapila acts in a lightening speed to relive his lovesick friend of his pain. Even after Kapila's departure, Devadatta swears to the Gods.

Kapila goes to the house of Padmini to accomplish his mission. His mission is to convey Devadatta's love to Padmini and get her as the bride to Devadatta. On seeing her, Kapila is dumbfolded by her beauty. He gapes in awe finding her to be the embodiment of celestial beauty.

KAPILA.(Gapes at her.Aside.) I give up, Devadatta. I surrender to your judgement. I hadn't thought anyone could be more beautiful than the wench Ragini who acts Rambha in our village troupe. But

this one! You're right-she is Yakshini, Shakuntala, Urvashi, Indumati-all rolled into one.

PADMINI. You knocked, didn't you?

KAPILA. Er-yes...

PADMINI. Then why are you gaping at me? What do you want?
(Act I, 16)

Padmini is not only beautiful but also extremely intelligent. Kapila finds her to be a hard nut to be cracked. She baffles him with a string of questions. She questions him directly the reason for gaping at her. In patriarchy society, women are not supposed to freely speak with strangers. It is considered as improper behaviour to speak with a man and question him in the manner in which Padmini questioned Kapila. She breaks the patriarchal law of questioning a man and that too a stranger of his behaviour. She revolts against it willingly.

Padmini asks a string of questions and baffles him. She does it in order to derive substitute gratification out of his bafflement. It is evident when Kapila says that he would touch her feet in order to meet the master and parents of Padmini, she asks him to touch her feet. When he hesitates, she says that she had touched the feet of all the members of her house due to

one reason or other, but no one has touched her feet yet.

KAPILA. (looking around; aside).

No one here. Still I have to find out her name. Devadatta

must be in pain and...He will never forgive me if I go back now. (Aloud.) Madam, please. I have some very important work. I'll touch your feet...

PADMINI. You will? Really? Do you know, I've touched everyone's feet in this house sometime or the other, but no one's ever touched mine? You will?

KAPILA. (slapping his forehead as he sinks to the ground). I'm finished-decimated-powered to dust-powered into tiny specks of flour. (To Padmini.) My mother, can I at least talk to a servant?

PADMINI. I knew it. I knew you wouldn't touch my feet. (Act I, 18)

It is convention in patriarchal society that a woman should touch the feet of men and elders but not men. Men consider it as the most dishonourable act for a man to touch the feet of a woman who is other than his mother. Padmini finds herself to be the victim of male order. She seeks revenge on men and to accomplish that she asks Kapila to touch her feet without any fore thought. She has

made up her mind to bring down the male order.

Devadatta and Padmini get married with the help of Kapila. Devadatta loves Padmini to the core. But Padmini dotes on Kapila. Devadatta is a Brahmin. He is fair and supple. He spends his time reading Vedas, writing books and poems. But Kapila is the son of blacksmith. He is brawny, dark and well-built. As time passes, Padmini is bored with Devadatta's knowledge and his work. Moreover, Devadatta develops potbelly, which Padmini hates. She longs for variety and spice in life. The beauty of Padmini also bewitches Kapila. He too dotes on her. They feel at home at each other's company. Padmini longs for extra-marital relationship with Kapila, who is brawny and well built. She has no sense of shame because she feels that she is the rebel of patriarchal laws. But Kapila is afraid of Devadatta. He is afraid because he does not want their friendship to be in danger. Hence, he tries to flirt with Padmini without the knowledge of Devadatta. But Padmini does not have any fear about her husband. She flirts with Kapila in front of Devadatta. Since Devadatta and Kapila are portrayed as brothers, Padmini's lust for Kapila becomes incest. Since incest is a taboo in accordance with patriarchal society, Padmini's lust and her flirting

behaviour too becomes a taboo. Woman has a tendency to look for a chance to break the patriarchal laws. Padmini willingly breaks the laws of man by flirting with Kapila. Devadatta is put in a tight corner. He hesitates to take up the issue with Padmini or else with Kapila. He does not want to hurt the feelings of Padmini.

GirishKarnad, in this play, has depicted a strong and revolutionary female character. Karnad has portrayed Padmini as a revolutionary character from the very beginning of the play Hayavadana. She faces the cunningness of her husband and she schemes to attain fulfillment in her life. Padmini defiles patriarchy and mock at it by turning out as polyandry. Padmini asserts herself as women. The psyche of women is different from men. She thinks in different plane. She breaks the patriarchal rules with her full knowledge. Padmini is psychologically strong and she likes to be a puppet in the hands of a patriarchal society.

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