REVERSE TRANSFORMATION IN THE PLAY “HAYAVADANA” BY GIRISH KARNAD

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Abstract

Well Eminent and versatile writer Girish Karnad’s third popular play in English is Hayavadana. This paper deals with the reverse transformation of the humans in the journey of completeness. Human failed to retain their identity in search of completeness while the animal succeeded in regaining its identity. The central theme- The story of Devadatta and Kapila is based on the tale from the Kathasaritsagara. But the main theme is borrowed from Thomas Man’s – The Transposed Heads. The horse regained its full form with its neigh in the end of the story and thus achieved its completeness. On the other hand, the child retained its human smile and become a complete human-being. The Hayavadana was happy to become a full animal while the humans Kapila and Devadatta lost their lives without attaining their completeness. Padmini also unsatisfied with the end result and performed sati. Darwin’s theory says that humans are evolved from Animals. But in Hayavadana, the human attains the animal form in reverse transformation. The mother of Hayavadana loved the horse and got married to it. When he became a human being, she rejected to accept him. So she was cursed to become a horse. She was happy to lose her identity as a human and ready to become a horse. Her love for a horse made her a horse and thus she achieved her completeness. Hayavadana wanted to attain its completeness whether it will be a horse or may be a human. At-last he became a complete horse but with a human voice. The son of Padmini exchanged his neigh with Hayavadana’s human voice. Thus the mother and her son Hayavadana achieved completeness in reverse transformation by becoming a horse.

Keywords: Exchange of neigh for humanlaugh, Horseman conversion, Human transformation of animal, Lust for love. Reverse transformation., Transposed heads.

INTRODUCTION

Hayavadana is a story based on the search of completeness. Devadatta, the son of a Brahmin and Kapila, the son of a Blacksmith were intimate friends lived in Dharmapura.

Bhagavatasings: Two friends there were- one mind, one heart. Devadatta loved Padmini and Kapila arranged their marriage. After the marriage Kapila accompanied the couple. Padmini gradually fell for the physique of Kapila. Kapila also fell for her but maintained a distance for the sake of his friend Devadatta. Padmini became pregnant and wanted to go for the Ujjain fair. Devadatta disliked Kapila accompanying them in their journey but Padmini insisted Kapila to come. On their way, they noticed the Fortunate lady’s flower. Kapila brought a heap of it and Padmini stared at him which was noticed by Devadatta. They found Rudra temple and Kali temple in the top of the hill. Padmini and Kapila approached the Rudra temple as it was closer and the path was in good condition. Whereas Devadatta reached the Kali temple which was not known by Padmini and Kapila. He blessed both of them to live together and sacrificed his life to Kali by cutting off his head. Kapila found the dead body of Devadatta in no time he sacrificed his head. Padmini, in search of both of them, terrified to look at the dead corps. She was getting ready to cut off her head using the same sword. Kali stopped her and asked her to rearrange the heads with their body to come up alive. In confusion Padmini mixed them up. She arranged the body of Devadatta with Kapila’s head and fixed the body of Kapila with Devadatta’s head. They came alive. Then the question raised whom to accept as Padmini’s husband. A sage came there and gave a judgement that the head would take the possession. Thus the transposed head problem was solved temporarily. Then the Devadatta’s head with Kapila’s body accompanied Padmini to home. Disappointed Kapila went to forest. After sometimes, Padmini thought of Kapila and so she asked Devadatta to go to the Ujjain fair. When he went to the fair, she carried her son to the forest to meet Kapila. She stayed with him and never returned home. Devadatta found her in the place of Kapila and they fought with each other like beasts. They died at the end and Padmini performed sati. Her son was given to
Bhagavadha to bring him up for five years with the forest people and safely hand over him to Devadatta’s father. The Transposed head converted the humans to behave like an animal.

REVERSE TRANSFORMATION:

The first scene itself begins with the devotion to Lord Ganesa who is incomplete with broken tusk and crooked belly having Elephant face with human body. This is an exact example of reverse transformation from full human to half-human. In the subplot, Hayavadana-the creature with horse head and human body was in search of completeness. As per Darwin’s theory man evolved from animal. But in Hayavadhana, the evolution or transformation is reversed. After worshipping the Goddess Kali, Hayavadana became a complete horse.

In GirishKarnad’s words in Hayavadana:

Hayavadana: The goddess appeared. Very prompt. But looked rather put out. She said - rather peevishly, I thought – ‘Why don’t you people go somewhere else if you want to chop off your stupid heads? Why do you have to come to me?’ I feel at her feet and said, ‘Mother, make me complete.’ She said ‘So be it’ and disappeared - even before I could say ‘Make me a complete man!’ I became a horse.

He became a complete animal from half human. That means the evolution is reversed. After the reverse transformation, his human voice was not changed. He tried to sing many patriotic songs to convert his human voice.

Hayavadana: I have become a complete horse- but not a complete being! This human voice –this cursed human voice-it’s still there! How can I call myself complete? What should I do, Bhagavata Sir? How can I get rid of this human voice?

Bhagavata: I don’t know what to advise you, Hayavadana.

Hayavadana: That’s why I sing all these patriotic songs- and the National Anthem! That particularly! I have noticed that the people singing the National Anthem always seem to have ruined their voices, so I try. But-but-it-it doesn’t seem to work. What should I do?

Once he laughed with Padmini’s son he obtained his neigh. Padmini’s son exchanged his neigh with Hayavadana and blessed with human laugh.

HUMAN TRANSFORMATION TO ANIMAL:

Hayavadana’s mother was the Princess of Karnataka. She was very gorgeous and her father wanted to marry her off to prince of noble countries like China, Persia, Africa and other parts of the world. Atlast, handsome Prince of Araby sitting on his great white stallion came to marry her. She fainted on seeing him. Her father thought that she liked the Prince and arranged for their marriage. When she recovered to normal form she wanted to marry only the white stallion not the prince. Everyone was shocked to hear this and no one can dissuade her. So she was married off to the white stallion. She lived with him for fifteen years happily. One fine day she could not find the horse and in that place she found a beautiful celestial being, a Gandharva. He was cursed by the God Kubera for some act of misbehaviour. After fifteen years he had become his original form but his wife didn’t accept him. She wanted to live with the white stallion not with this Gandharva. Disappointed by her, he cursed her to become a horse. She was happy to become a horse and she thought that she attained her completeness by becoming a horse. Thus the human transformed into an animal.

Hayavadana: He cursed her to become a horse herself. So my mother became a horse and ran away prancing happily. My father went back to his Heavenly Abode. Only I – the child of their marriage-was left behind.

HORSEMAN CONVERSION:

Everybody looking at Hayavadana thought that a man was wearing the mask. Bhagavata also thought like that at first but after knowing the fact he was stunned. Hayavadana was left alone and he searched for his identity. He had all the qualities of human and followed the rules. Hayavadana asked why he should suffer without doing any wrong.
Hayavadana: What else? What rishi? What sage? What? Whom have I wronged? What have I done to anyone? Let anyone come forward and say that I’ve caused him or her any harm. I haven’t- I know I haven’t. Yet.....

Bhagavata advised him to visit holy places to get into a complete man. But Hayavadana said that he had visited many places like Banaras, Rameshwaram, Gokarn, Haridwar, Gaya, Kedarnath, Dargah of Khwaja Yusuf Baba, the Grotto of our Virgin Mary. He also sort the help of Magicians, mendicants, maharshis, fakirs, saints and sadhus. He hated the head but loved his long mane. He even ready to offer his mane to Tirupati. So Bhagavata advised him to worship the Goddess Kali of Chitrakoot. After a long journey, Hayavadana worshipped the Goddess Kali but he was distressed about his horse face. So he was ready to cut off his head and wanted to offer it to the Goddess. But Kali stopped him and gave him boon to become a horse. He wanted to ask the boon to become a full human but before asking the Goddess she blessed him to become a full horse as she was in half sleep. Thus the half man converted into an animal by the boon of the Goddess. But he took great effort to change his human voice into a neigh. After exchanging the human voice with the neigh of Padmini’s son Hayavadana became a complete horse. But GirishKarnad ridiculed the human behaviour of urinating in the public place especially in India. Though Hayavadana had horse face, he advised the actor not to urinate in the public place. He had some human values. But real human beings lack the quality of good behaviour of a human. At the end half human was reversed into an animal.

EXCHANGE OF NEIGH WITH HUMAN VOICE:

Hayavadana, a horse faced human struggled a lot to attain completeness. He visited a lot of Holy places to seek its original identity. Bhagavada advised him to visit the Goddess Kali of Chitrakoot to get rid of this nature. But Kali blessed him to become an animal. So Hayavadana was happy to be a complete horse but there was a lack in his voice. He tried lot of ways to change his human voice but when he laughed with Padmini’s son he got his neigh. GirishKarnad belonged to the period of post-colonial India. The western culture mixed with the Indian culture. During Independence people were in confusion where they were and what should they do. The transfusion of western culture into the blood of Indian people created chaos in following the tradition and culture. Girish also was in search of his identity. This reflected in his creation of the character Hayavadana. English became the common language among the upper class people and educated people. So there was an unbalance in the society whether to speak English or to follow regional languages. Indians were in the thought of the influence of English and western culture how it affected their normal life. And also switching the heads theme was obtained by Girish to ridicule the status of Indian people after the Independence. We were under the British Rule for more than two hundred centuries. After Independence people were in the position of switched heads to adapt the new Government. How Devadatta with Kapila’s body took the possession of Padmini, the Indian Government took the possession of Indian people.

LUST FOR LOVE:

Kapila and Devadatta were close friends. Devadatta fell in love with Padmini and his friend Kapila arranged for their marriage. Later Kapila and Padmini developed a relationship with each other. Padmini got attracted towards Kapila’s physique and this fact was known to Devadatta. So he started to avoid Kapila being intimate towards his wife. When he noticed Padmini was stunned at the Kapila’s physique he wanted to sacrifice his life to goddess Kali. He did so and Kapilasacrificed his life for the sake of his friend Devadatta. After that Padmini noticed two dead bodies and she prepared herself to cut off her head. Kali stopped her and asked her to arrange the heads with their body. In excitement she misplaced the bodies with the heads and so switched heads came alive. She was happy to haveDevadatta with Kapilas strong body. She had lust for Kapila not pure love. She only liked the body not the heart. But Devadatta loved Padmini whole heartedly and he could not bother or harm both of them. So he sacrificed his head. Kapilas’ love for Devadatta controlled him not to create an affair with Padmini and on seeing Devadattas’s dead body he committed suicide by offering his head. But Padmini companied Devadatta after misplacing the bodies because she was attracted towards the strong body of Kapila. This shows that she developed lust not love. In mean time Devadatta lost his strong body and this made Padmini to search for Kapila. She asked her husband to go to Ujjain fair and buy the dolls. When he left for the fair she went to the forest and lived with Kapila. Devadatta found her with Kapila and so they started a combat with each other. At the end both were murdered and so she performed sati.

Padmini: they burned, lived, fought, embraced and died. I stood silent. If I’d said, ‘Yes, I’ll live with you both’, perhaps they would have been alive yet. But I couldn’t say it. I couldn’t say, ‘yes”. No,Kapila, no, Devadatta. I know it in my blood. You couldn’t have lived together. You would’ve had to share not only me but your bodies as well. Because you knew death you died in each other’s arms. You could only have lived ripping each other to pieces. I had to drive you to death. You forgave each other, but again, left me out.
Padmini from the beginning, she loved Kapila for strong body but unfortunately married Devadatta. After marriage she could not express her wish for other man. It must be considered as illegal. As an Indian woman she could love secretly but had no rights to express as per tradition. So she performed Sati. As a human being we have to follow some ethics and be loyal to our life partner. But here Padmini’s extra marital affair caused that brutal combat and terrific end of Kapila and Devadatta. So the evolution theory is reversed.

CONCLUSION:

The Hayavadana’s mother who was a human, by the curse of her husband transformed into a horse. On the other hand, Hayavadana who was a half-human transformed into a complete horse with the blessings of Goddess Kali. The animal body conquers what was good in man. It is evident that misplacing the heads made the human to behave like an animal. Also, misplacing the heads symbolises the British rule over Indian people and the effects after Independence created a drastic change in the tradition. Actor in the play ‘Hayavadana’ urinating in the public showed the animalistic behaviour which was advised by half-human Hayavadana. On the whole we can see that human are becoming animals in reverse transformation.

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