

Beauty in Identity: Dual Definition of Identity of Padmini in *Hayavadana* and Jasmine in *Jasmine*

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Abstract

Beauty can be defined as the quality or an illusion of human mind. Literature is one of the best way by which the exact meaning of beauty to be explored. When a comparison is done between beauty and the serious term identity, the co operations between the two terms is drastic and complex in nature such a strange mix of identity and beauty is proved with the help of Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*.

In Girish Karnad's play *Hayavadana*, the central figure is Padmini, a women character who desires both muscular body and intellect through her subconscious. When Kapila and Devadatta transposes their head before Kali temple reveal the sub conscious crave for the wholeness. Here Padmini loses her identity because of her inner desires to be fulfilled and thus the beauty of the character is lost.

In the novel *Jasmine* the female protagonist tries to handle the problem of loss of culture and bring about a new identity in U.S.A. When she leaves the country to fulfil her wishes, she realises that self independence is not to be an Indian or American but to be at peace within herself.

This paper foregrounds the search for identity of both Padmini and Jasmine through their journey to be perfect. They are not aware of losing their inner beauty through the search for other identities. Thus we can consider identity to be closely related with beauty and identity is the concrete building named after beauty.

Keywords: Identity Crisis, Beauty, Self Determination

Introduction

The quest for beauty is universal and enduring. Beauty can be a human attributed quality which differentiates a thing in the universe from one another. It is also the trait that appeals physical senses. An object or living being have their own outer beauty as well as inner beauty which make them odd, the admirable quality of a person is also considered as beauty. Beauty is that quality which pleases our senses. In Aurobindo's words: "The search for beauty is only in its beginning a satisfaction in the beauty of form, the beauty which appeals to the physical senses and vital impressions, impulsions, desires. Behind the soul of beauty in us, besides the contact, the revelation, the uplifting delight of an absolute beauty in all things which feels to be present, but which neither the senses and the instincts by themselves can give though they may its channels, for it is supra sensuous- not the reason and intelligence, though they too are a channel, for its supra- rational, supra -intellectual- but to which through all these veils the soul itself seeks to arrive" (CWSA Vol 25.144)

The notion of beauty can be identified on four levels: They are on the physical level, emotional level, and

intellectual level and on the spiritual level. A person will go through all these levels once in her/his lifetime. The significance of identity is reflected in social interaction. But when a woman experiences identity crisis means she is unhappy with her marriage, her children and financial security which sacrifices her personality before others and thus she searches for their identity throughout her life. This paper tries to illustrate the identity crisis in the play *Hayavadana* by Girish Karnad and *Jasmine* in the novel by Bharati Mukherjee.

Girish Karnad was born in Maharashtra in 1938. His enthusiasm in watching Yakshagana and Natak Mandali influenced his writing on a higher level. He is a prolific writer in Indian English drama. All his play touches the core of human mind with all the modernity. *Hayavadana* is third play of Karnad which published in 1970. The play depicts the philosophic crisis of mind and body as well as the identity crisis of Padmini, the women character in the novel itself. The central theme of the play was taken from Vetala-panchavimsati in Kathasaritsagara which is a story collection in Sanskrit.

Bharati Mukerjee is an Indian author who immigrated to Canada and later becomes an American of Indian origin.

Mukarjee has lived through several arduous phases of life as an American similar to the character Jasmine in the novel *Jasmine*. She considers herself as a European for many reasons. Her characters also show the cultural identity crisis as well as self-identity crisis which become a distinctive feature of her novels. Her female protagonists are in striving for equality and problems of immigration. Her novels also explore the modernization in traditional Indian society and after effects of it. The novel *Jasmine* foregrounds the character Jyothi's adaptation but not the defeat.

In Girish Karnad's play *Hayavadana*, he made use of masques, mime, half curtains, dance and music with the elements of essentialism and humanism which touches the core of human emotions. His play was published in 1970 and it is his third play which comprises the philosophical crisis of mind and body. The crisis was reflected in the major characters like Kapila, Devadatta and Padmini.

Karnad's play *Hayavadana* is a triangle love story of Kapila, Devadatta and Padmini. Devadatta loves and married to Padmini but later Padmini got attracted towards Kapila because of the muscular body and the strong psyche. Kapila also infatuated with the beauty of Padmini. Like all husbands who are selfish about his wife, Devadatta also feels prejudice over Padmini. Devadatta then goes to the Kali temple and cut down his head because he suspected his wife's loyalty. When Kapila sees Devadatta lying dead, he blamed himself and he also beheads himself. Padmini on seeing both the dead bodies, Padmini got afraid of accusations of people who killed the two loyal friends, she also prepares to kill herself, Kali feels pity towards her and appeared in front of her. She prayed to rejoin the heads, but in a hurry, she got confused and thus resulted in the transposing of heads of Kapila and Devadatta. It is one of the instances in the play where identity crisis appears. Both Kapila and Devadatta lost their head mean their identity and beauty of the character is also lost. Then the question arises; The head or body is superior?. In the subplot of *Hayavadana* where horseman acquires completeness but playwright focuses on the ambiguous nature of human beings that swings around infatuation, a search towards beauty. Padmini's search for an ideal person should be intelligent and should have an attractive body which got fulfilled when the transposing of heads got occurred.

Identity of a person is in his character. Padmini is a modern woman who got ties between the two polarities: traditional women who loves her husband but at the same time she is magnetized with other person which is a modern aspect. After the transposing of heads, Padmini

lives happily with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body. She is satisfied with this change. Karnad uses both modernist ideas of identity and conventional idea of motifs of folk tales, chorus, masks, doll, and he included metatheatrical method.

The concept of perfect is lacking in the characters of Hayavadana, though nothing in this world is perfect, human beings are searching for complete beauty, that is for perfectness and this quest remains incomplete.

In the beginning of the play, Kapila is complete but Devadatta and Padmini never attain perfection because of controlling of mind over body. They are the characters who represent the whole humanity. In Karnad's opinion 'quest for one's own identity is old as the existence of human being'. Devadatta and Padmini are both intelligent and beautiful but the undercurrents of attraction towards Kapila made Padmini lower ranked Indian women. She opened up her admiration when the three went to Ujjain fair, in the middle of the journey Kapila goes to pluck flowers for her: "How he climbs.... like an ape. Before I could say yes, he had taken off his shirt, pulled his dhoti up and swung up the branch. And what an ethereal shape! Such a broad back like an ocean with muscles rippling across it and then that small feminine waist which looks so helped. (96) These lines describe the admiration of Padmini towards Kapila. There we can see the physical desire for Padmini towards Kapila which makes her identity to shatter before.

The modern man in search of their real identity and the characters Devadatta and Kapila became the examples of loss of identity and thus the beauty of the character. *Jasmine* is a novel by Bharathi Mukarjee which focuses on the search for identity in a totally new land. Mukherjee mentions her own quest and realising that she is trying to separate her own identity. Here the protagonist Jasmine rejects her native land and moved to a new land thus be transformed into a new identity. In the beginning of the novel, Jasmine retells her story from her young age about an astrologer who predicts near future that she will be widowed and exiled. But even as a child, Jasmine has the willpower to face anything and want to have a new identity in the new world. As an immigrant, she also faced discrimination and difficulties in life there. But she refuses all these discrimination and she lived there. *Jasmine* is the reflection of many other women who strive for their identity in the society through associating herself. Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* entangles the experiences of an immigrant who suffered alienation, isolation, discrimination, and identity crisis came across in her life. She endured to a series of provocation to become an American citizen.

In the struggle to rejuvenate herself, she disguised into several renaming and undergone continuous metamorphoses in her journey from India to America. Jyothi is the name given by her husband but later known by Lillian Gordon, Jasmine becomes Jazzy. She is Jaze to Taylor, who is the lover in the later part. Then she became Jane Ripplemeyer when she escapes from the unpleasant situation that she underwent. Through this, she turned into Jaze to Taylor who is *glamorous and liberated self to transform into sophisticated American women*. *Jasmine* is a novel on account of compliance but not a defeat before culture or people. Being a rural Punjabi girl, she suffered a lot of restrictions from the society as well as from her family. But she does accept the path of the husband and renamed as Jasmine, started to aspire to go to America, the land of good fortune, but it all gets shattered when her husband dies off in an attack on there. After a long time, she tracks back into her dreams and pledged to carry over her husband's (Prakash) dream. She acquired all the power to destroy all the evils that lead to the death of her husband. She executed the criminal Sukhawinder, the khalsa lion who killed Prakash. Despite all the restrictions, she shackled all the issues of caste, gender and family and learns to live without the help of husband for herself. She is a residual, a fighter and an adaptor who withstands her own identity to survive in the society.

Every woman has their own aspirations to live and find happiness, unlike other women in India, who got depressed when their soul mate passed away, Jasmine being a self-determined woman who seeks the moral courage to self-awareness in an optimistic way. Her challenge to go beyond the norms of the society mirrored her identity in the patriarchy. The novel *Jasmine* is a fusion of two cultures that is India and America, which have two cultural attitudes when Indian becomes the survival part of the life of jasmine, to chase her dreams. But in America, she feels identity crisis through different ways; she is categorised as 'other' and marginalised by race and gender.

The beauty of a person is his/her character. According to Indian traditional view, a married woman should only devote her husband. The extramarital affair or a relationship is false for Indians. In the play *Hayavadana* the character Padmini is focussing on the outer beauty of the medium to rendering her external pleasure. There is a quote that "when wealth is lost something is lost when the health is lost nothing is lost but when character is lost everything is lost". Here her identity is the 'character' that lost in the play.

In the novel *Jasmine*, the protagonist is seeking good fortune and went to America. Here her cultural identity is lost due to the immigration of the protagonist. Culture has an important role in creating one's identity. She displaces the culture to create new self. Thus we foreground the identity crisis as the loss of beauty. If someone feels identity crisis means it is the crisis that they lack in their character itself. Both the protagonists are in an identity crisis that ends Padmini into death and jasmine into a new self.

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