

Comparative Study of Communication Patterns in Girish Karnad's *Naga-Mandala* and *Hayavadana*

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Abstract:

Effective communication plays a vital role in healthy human relationships. The origin of human Communication functions as a safety valve for the purgation of the saturated emotions and feelings. With the advancement of technology, communication has developed by leaps and bounds. Today, communication has become faster and accurate as never before. However, another rather dark side of the fact cannot be neglected. The advanced technology had made the communication and thereby human relationships more complicated. The original purpose of communication that is to exchange the emotions and feelings somewhere has changed its nature. The communicational gap leads to thwarted human relationships. Girish Karnad deals with the theme of same dented human relationships as a major theme in his plays. The characters in his plays found as the victim of miscommunication or the lack of proper communication. The emotional touch in the communication is in danger zone in spite of availability of so many advanced methods and modes of communication around us. The communication gap in the human relations may lead to the destruction of the human relations. That's why it becomes necessary to communicate effectively for the better and healthy human relationships.

Key Words: Girish Karnad, *Hayavadana*, *Naga-Mandala*, communication, human relationships, barriers to communication

Girish Karnad (1938-2019) significantly deals with the theme of human relations in his plays. His main concern is man-woman relationship in most of his play. His plays discuss the damaged man-woman relationship due to lack of communication or poor communication.

The play *Naga-Mandala* (1990) observes the pattern of one way communication in the beginning and dominates almost the thorough play. In the play, Rani is newly married to Appanna. She has a number of aspirations and dreams of a happy married life like any other girl. She enters in the house of Appana with many wishes in her mind. But, her dreams are shattered very soon as Appana proves as a worst husband. He ill-treats his wife as bad as slave. There is no communication between them. Communication is the first step towards the foundation of concrete human relations. Such communication is not initiated between them and that's why they are deprived of good life partners.

In another play *Hayavadana* (1975), Devadatta is not able to propose Padmini himself. He takes the help of his bosom friend Kapila. Kapila functions as an agent in the communication where the feeling sand emotions of one person (sender) are reached to another person (receiver) successfully. Kapila becomes a mediator of communication between a lover and would be wife. The same mediator is considered as a barrier afterwards by Devadatta. He finds that his wife is more interested in communication with Kapila. He complains of it as:

PADMINI (*back at the window*): Where is Kapila?

DEAVADATTA: ...and drool over Kapila all day.

PADMINI (*taken aback*): What do you mean?

DEVADATTA: What else should I say? The other day I wanted to read

a play of Bhasa's to you and sure enough Kapila drops in. (Karnad:1975, 20)

This communication assures Padmini's fascination towards Kapila and Deavadatta's jealousy over it. Understanding is the crux of any successful communication. Without understanding the message, communication is in vain. Understanding is expected from both the ends viz, sender and the receiver. It is a praiseworthy skill of Karnad who shows that even the communication can be misunderstood at divine level. In the play *Hayavadana*, the Goddess Kali fails to understand the mind of Hayavadana and makes him a full horse instead of a human. Thus, a miscommunication proves as a life changer in his life.

The words and actions used for praising and appreciating someone lead to positive and affectionate communication and thereby strong bondage in the human relationships. Appreciation is one of the strong psychological needs of human being. It pleases the person and creates affectionate relations. Every person aspires that he/she should be appreciated by others. It gives the happiness of social acceptance and approval. Every human likes to be praised of his/her beauty. It creates sense of satisfaction and pleasure. Rani in *Naga-Mandala* also strongly feels and desires the same feedback in the form of love and affection from her husband. When such type of feedback is received, the sender finds satisfaction and becomes eager and excited for more communication. Rani doesn't get such type of response from Appanna which leads to turmoil in their relationship as husband and wife. She pines for the love of her husband she is deprived of. On the other hand, Naga in the form of Appanna appreciates the beauty of Rani. He showers the words of appreciation to please Rani.

The verbal communication is found insufficient when the matter of affectionate relations is considered. The action plays equal vital role in the relationship. Devadatta is a fine poet and writer. He praises and appreciates Padmini's beauty through his poems. It gives the sense of happiness to Padmini. But, it is not enough for Padmini. Padmini is such a type of woman who pines for a strong man. Verbal appreciation is not enough for her. That's why, she is attracted strongly towards the steel bodied Kapila. She finds more comfort in communication with Kapila who hardly knows any type of poetry and literature. He uses crude language even for communication. His style of communication surpasses the superfluous way of communication possessed by a learned Brahmin Devadatta.

The social position matters in communication as well. Persons belonging to different social strata communicate from different point of view and in a different style. In the play *Hayavadana*, Devadatta belongs to upper well learned Brahmin caste while Kapila is a son of ironsmith who belongs to a lower caste. This alma-matter of superiority and inferiority complex plays a significant role in communication between two persons belonging to different classes in Indian society. Kapila never shares equal seat with Devadatta though they are bosom friends. Kapila prefers to seat on the ground. He accepts and listens to his every order. The communication between two friends is like one way communication. Devadatta is sender and Kapila is receiver. Kapila listens to his friend and follows his words without any hesitation promptly. Their communication reflects upon the Indian social hierarchy. Devadatta falls in love with Padmini. He wants to propose her for marriage. But he doesn't possess the courage to go for it. He insists his friend Kapila to propose Padmini on his behalf. Without hesitating anymore, Kapila proceeds towards Padmini's residence.

Nonverbal communication is not just supplementary to verbal communication but sometimes it gives the exact meaning aimed through the message. Karnad uses various forms of non-verbal communication to boost the verbal communication. The door frame of Padmini's house has an engraving of a two-headed bird at the top. This is the only clue provided to Kapila by Devadatta to find out her house. This two headed bird symbolises the dual mentality and confusion that Padmini very soon going to face in her married life. As the time passes, we witness the double folded mental status of Padmini as she finds herself involved in both the men. Karnad uses the dolls in *Hayavadana*. The communication between two dolls highlights the cognition process going on in Padmini's mind. Her secret pining for a man other than her husband is exposed through the communication between the dolls.

DOLL I (*in a hushed voice*): Hey.

DOLL II: Yes?

DOLL I: Look.

DOLL II: Where?

DOLL I: Behind her eyelids. She is dreaming.

DOLL II: I don't see anything.

DOLL I: It's still hazy – hasn't started yet. Do you see it now?

DOLL II (*eagerly*): Yes, yes.

(*They stare at her.*)

DOLL I: A man.

DOLL II: But not her husband.

DOLL I: No, someone else. (Karnad:1975, 48)

The communication between the dolls is very much seminal and symbolic. It clearly suggests the audience that there is someone in Padmini's mind whom she meets in her dreams other than her husband.

Karnad uses dramatic technique as a mediator between the stage and the audience as uses the character of Bhagavata in *Hayavadana*. Bhagavata communicates with the audience directly in the beginning and sets the plot of the play. Through this communication the audience gets an idea about what they are going to witness very soon on the stage. Bhagavata also intervenes in between during the play when the situation demands explanation for the audience. Similarly, *Naga-Mandala* the plot of the play is set through the communication among the flames that have gathered in a dilapidated temple outside a village. The communication among the flames and a man over there provides the settings of the play for the audience.

Karnad successfully brings forth the suppression of women at the hands of patriarchy through the communication pattern they follow. In the play *Naga-Mandala*, Rani is excommunicated in and out. She is locked in the house so that she can't communicate with anyone outside the house. Her husband Appanna also hardly communicates with her. The only communication that takes place between them is:

RANI: Listen – (*Fumbling for words*) Listen – I feel – frightened – alone at night –

APPANNA: What is there to be scared of? Just keep to yourself. No one will bother you. Rice!

(*Pause.*)

RANI: Please, you could –

APPANNA: Look, I don't like idle chatter. Do as you are told, you understand?

(Finishes his meal, gets up.)

I'll be back tomorrow, for lunch. (Karnad:1990, 7)

We find no trace of affection and care as there should be in the communication between a husband and wife. This communication pattern brings forth the lifelessness and dryness in the relationship between Rani and Appanna. As the time moves Appanna suspects that someone definitely communicates with Rani. The excommunication that is imposed upon Rani is a symbol of patriarchy and ownership asserted by Appanna. He never wishes that anything will crack his egoism as a husband. He keeps a dog and then a mongoose outside the house when he is outside to keep strict watch on Rani. The dog and the mongoose symbolise the barriers which are deliberately created by Appanna so that Rani cannot communicate with anyone in the world outside. A blind lady named Kurudavva plays the role of an agent of communication. She comes to know about the loveless relations between Rani and her husband Appanna.

For Kurudavva, her son Kappanna is the only source of communication. She is a blind and carried away by her son Kappanna on his back. He informs her ever details in the village. Through her son Kurudavva comes to know about the plight of Rani. She also provides the solution on her problem. In the later part, Kappanna goes on missing who was the agent of communication for Kurudavva. Without her son, she runs helter-skelter in the village like a mad person. She discloses her mind to Rani:

KURUDAVVA: Now I wander about calling him. They tell me he is not in the village. They think I am mad. I know he is not here. I know he won't come back. But what can I do?

How can I sit in the house doing nothing? I must do

something for him. (Karnad:1990, 38)

Her madness is because of the loss of communication as her son is not available as an agent of communication for her.

Appanna never shares a word of affection with his wife, Rani. She is also silenced by Naga in the form of Appanna though he showers the love and affection Rani pines for. Whenever Rani is confused of the dual behaviour of Appanna, she tries to interrogate the truth and every time she is silenced. This process of silencing is a symbol of patriarchal manipulation in the society. Rani is in chaotic mentality as she is unable to understand the weird behaviour of her husband. She expresses her plight as she is denied any type of proper communication:

NAGA: *(Sadly)* I realize it cannot remain a secret for long. That is why

I said, as long as possible. Please, do as I tell you.

RANI: *(Blankly)* Yes, I shall. Don't ask questions. Do as I tell you.

Don't ask questions. Do as I tell you. I won't ask questions.

I shall do what you tell me. Scowls in the day. Embraces

at night. The face in the morning unrelated to the touch at night.

But day or night, one motto does not change: Don't ask questions.

Do as I tell you. (Karnad:1990, 32)

The communication pattern doesn't change between Rani and her husband Appanna or Naga in the form of Appanna. Appanna doesn't show any affection for her and thereby adopts a one way communication where he plays the role of sender and Rani is on receiving end. Naga in the form of Appanna loves Rani like anything, adores her, calls her as 'queen' but still she is denied the communication when needs answers of her some questions. Such type of mono way of communication between husband and wife is still observed in one or other form that affects the marital relations at its worst level. We observe the worst level of communication on the part of Appanna when he comes to know about the pregnancy of his wife. He uses abusive and unconstitutional language for her.

APPANNA: Aren't you ashamed to admit it, you harlot? I locked you in,

and yet you managed to find a lover! Tell me who it is. Who did you go with your sari off?

RANI: I swear to you I haven't done anything wrong!

APPANNA: You haven't? And yet you have a bloated tummy. Just

pumped air into it, did you? And you think I'll let you get away

with that? You shame me in front of the whole village, you

darken my face, you slut – ! (Karnad:1990, 33)

The above communication brings into light the darker side of Appanna's personality. He is dishonest, disloyal, and treacherous with his wife and expects loyalty on her part. He accuses her of adultery in front of the whole village.

To conclude, one can observe various patterns of communication in the plays Hayavadana and Nagamandala by Girish Karnad. These patterns play a seminal role as they highlight social context in the play. Sometimes they prove as supplementary to convey the thorough of the text. Karnad uses tools of non-verbal communication with verbal

communication to make the situation clearer for the audience. He also makes the non-human things to communicate to explore the psyche of the characters on the stage. He is the master to use such techniques on the stage and there is no question in it.

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