



# APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN CONCEPTS IN THE PLAYS, 'HAYAVADANA AND NAGAMANDALA' BY GIRISH KARNARD

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**Abstract:** Norman O. Brown, a psychoanalyst, uses the Greek myths of Apollo and Dionysus in interpreting the alienation of body and mind and their unification. According to his explanation, human history can be divided into three stages primal unity, differentiation and final unity. Primitive man enjoyed the primal unity of the body and the mind, this is Apollonian effect. As man tried incessantly to grow above the biological level for ages, the body and the mind are finally alienated, this is Dionysian effect and man has become both physical and psychological being. These dichotomous concepts of order and chaos, compatibility and incompatibility and integration and segregation are well represented by the mythological gods Apollo and Dionysus in a thought provoking fashion. Though the mind depends on the body for its existence and function, it shows its supremacy on the latter. All human suffering, according to Norman O. Brown, is only due to the effect of self-alienation i.e., Dionysian concept. That's the reason why man many times behaves in a paradoxical manner. When the intense sustaining brings about awareness and when human knowledge reaches its heights, man has evolved Dionysian culture. These concepts help create and solve the major problems in the dramas Hayaavadana and Nagamandal as to why the Princess chooses a stallion for her husband, why the Goddess Kali makes Hayavadana a complete horse and why the lives of Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini reach such a sorry end. Likewise in Naga Mandala why Naga withstands his impulse of biting Rani and Appanna and decides to remain as a snake, besides, why Rani and Appanna accept the child as their own and keep the family together.

**Key words:** Dionysian, Apollonian, alienation, primal, incompatibility, dichotomy, paradox, sensuous, sensible, mythological

For the play Hayavadana, the playwright has heavily borrowed from 'The transposed Heads,' by Thomas Mann who borrowed the plot from a story from *Kathasaritsagara* by Somadeva, The play begins with alienation, the Dionysian concept, and ends with unification, the Apollonian concept. Lord Ganesha, with whose worship the play starts, Himself is an embodiment of alienation with an elephant head on a human body. A little later another incompatibility or incompleteness comes on the stage, the character Hayavadana, with a horse-head on a human body. Perhaps, it is strongly felt that the mythological figures are shown in the play to suggest the supremacy of the alienation, the Dionysian concept over man. Devadatta and Kapila represent the modern man who suffers from self-alienation and it agrees with what Norman O. Brown says in this aspect. It is said that Apollonian thought preserves, however the Dionysian thought destroys, self-consciousness. The intervention of the Goddess Kali and Her power become quite weak since the transposition of their heads and bodies fails to liberate Devadatta and Kapila from their incompleteness and the conflict between the minds and the bodies continues, gradually there comes unification when the minds have taken control of the bodies. The case of Padmini is different as she is more sensual than sensible.

Devadatta and Kapila, in Hayavadana, are bosom friends and are seen together in Dharmapura like Shridaman and Nanda, in The Transposed Heads by Thomas Mann. Devadatta is a Brahmin whereas Kapila is a blacksmith. Introducing the two characters, the Bhagavata sings, "Two friends there were - one mind, one heart." But as the play progresses, they are poles apart both physically and mentally. Devadatta is a 'man of intellect' and Kapila is a 'man of physique.' The former's are

intellectual exercises while the latter's are physical exercises. Devadatta neglects his body whereas Kapila his mind. In fact their friendship is based on the fact that they depend on each other for what each lacks. That is why it is said that they are complementary to each other.

If they are really complementary to each other, both should have been equal, what one doesn't have, the other has and vice versa. To imply that the mind is superior to the body, Devadatta sits in a chair while Kapila squats on the floor. Besides, in the play we can't see Devadatta visiting Kapila's house. But whenever Devadatta falls in love, he unfolds it to none other than Kapila who also expresses his willingness to do anything for Devadatta. During the conversation about Padmini, Kapila says that he is ready to anything for his friend, even to jump into a well and adds that his parents are not as important as Devadatta. He is ready to leave them if it is necessary. But both of them are not men of their words. That's why the Kali calls them liars.

In the words of Kapila it is perceived that Devadatta falls in love with fifteen girls, of course, for fifteen times, in two years, he fails to marry anyone of them. Here scholarly quality is higher than fickle mindedness. Yet again he falls in love with Padmini, for the sixteenth time. Opening his heart before his friend, Devadatta declares that he can't imagine his life without Padmini. Unlike Devadatta, Kapila does never fall in love. Besides, he ridicules his friend whenever he finds him falling in love. But this time he doesn't feel to represent his friend at Padmini. Devadatta says that if Padmini becomes his wife, he is ready to sacrifice his two arms to the Goddess Kali and his head to Lord Rudra. It seems it is not a thoughtful statement when one loses one's arms, one can't cut of one's head.

Devadatta's body does not respond as adequately as his mind that falls in love with Padmini and Kapila's mind is no longer smart enough to feel the sensations of his body. Thus there is almost no proper communication between their bodies and minds. Therefore both suffer from self-alienation. Hayavadana's mother prefers a stallion to a man as her husband. She perhaps thinks that animals are free from differentiation and self-alienation. The stallion becoming a *Gandharva* is a symbolic of the primitive man becoming civilized. Thus the primal unity in the latter stage becomes alienation, a journey from Apollonian to Dionysian. Similarly, the Goddess Kali also prefers unification rather than alienation and so she makes Hayavadana a complete horse, of course the voice problem remains for some time. The Goddess gives prominence to the head. In that way both Hayavadana and his mother at the end attain Apollonian states. Padmini is a mismatch to Devadatta and it is Kapila who perceives it in the very beginning that there would be no emotions integration between them. Yet he maintains silence because of his friend's intense love for her. Even after the marriage, Kapila pays frequent visits to Devadatta's house and Padmini finds in Kapila what she misses in her husband, the physical strength. Her attention to her husband is no more undivided and loyal. When the trio decides to embark on a trip to Ujjain, Devadatta gets a second thought that the journey to Ujjain may not be good for Padmini who is pregnant now besides, he wants to avoid the presence of Kapila. She seems to understand his fear and agrees to the cancellation of the trip. But no sooner does she see Kapila than she changes her mind. Devadatta doesn't understand why she has changed her mind and so does Hamlet, in Shakespeare's play, who grieves when his mother marries his uncle soon after the death of his father and he says, 'Frailty, thy name is woman!'

To the embarrassment of Devadatta, she prepares to go on the trip. Her infatuation for Kapila is very powerful due to the self-alienation. On the way, Padmini degrades the physique of her husband while praising Kapila's to the sky. All these certainly tempt and draw Kapila towards Padmini. Her instinct is to follow what she wants irrespective of chastity, morality, social norms and conditions which are a Dionysian effect. People of this type want two things, physical and mental comforts. They suffer no more from any other complexity of life. They snub their conscience. If Kapila has morality to mind the friendship between him and Devadatta, he can be aloof from Padmini even in thoughts. He lacks it due to the presence of Dionysian side in him.

After the transposition of the heads in the Kali temple, there is a heated argument between Kapila and Devadatta for the possession of Padmini. She takes Devadatta's side and goes to the extent of rebuking Kapila. She upholds the *rishi's* judgment, goes to Dharmapura with Devadatta since she has the best parts of the two friends and she feels no guilt of her grave mistake that leads to the transposition of the mind and the body the result of which questions her morality. Owing to the transposition, the loser is Kapila with weak mind and weak body. But Padmini's happiness does not last long since Devadatta ignores his body and revives his interest in the pursuit of reading and writing. She is disappointed with the weakness of her husband's body. Her mind starts thinking of Kapila.

The Dionysian side in Padmini is seen once again when she sends her husband to Ujjain on the pretext of buying dolls for the child and goes into the forest with her son in search of Kapila since her heart longs for him. Kapila is shocked to see Padmini in the forest. He has become as strong as he has been before. Padmini changes sides again and says that the boy is Kapila's son but, he doesn't agree to it as he believes that he is now Kapila and no longer Devadatta. But Padmini explains the problem to Kapila whose mind is rigid to the sensations of his body on account of self-alienation. When she touches him, his body recognizes the touch. Both surrender to the sensual delight.

Devadatta comes there and the two friends decide to fight till they die. In the duel Devadatta and Kapila kill each other and Padmini decides to commit *sati*, finding fault with the Goddess Kali who has played a key role in the transposition of the body and the mind. It is due to the Apollonian effect. But before committing *sati*, she requests the Bhagavata to give her son to the hunters saying that he is Kapila's son and when the boy gets five, he has to leave the boy at the revered Brahmin Vidyasagara of Dharmapura revealing to him that the boy is his grandson. Thus she wants to provide her son with physical and mental training so that he can at least, may attain unification, the Apollonian concept.

Padmini's son is brought to the Bhagavata when the former is five. But he is as morose as Kapila after the transposition. Meanwhile Hayavadana who now becomes a complete horse comes and expresses his grief over his human voice that still persists. As he laughs with his human voice, Padmini's son starts laughing and clapping giving up his moroseness. Similarly, Hayavadana loses his human voice and starts neighing due to the Apollonian effect. Thus Hayavadana and Padmini's son, help each other solve their problems. From the psychoanalysis point of view, in the primitive man, the body and the mind are in perfect harmony which Norman O. Brown calls it the Apollonian concept. As man has strived to be above biological plane for ages, he has evolved the Dionysian concept which causes alienation. Devadatta and Kapila, like the people of modern society, are the victims of self-alienation while Hayavadana, his mother and Padmini's son attain the Apollonian state, the undifferentiated body-mind.

In Nagamandala, Rani and Appanna are poles apart. Appanna has a concubine even when he is unmarried whereas Rani knows nothing of marriage, conjugal happiness or of anything. She is almost like a baby in the womb. What all she knows is her mother and father. Appanna after his marriage with Rani, puts her in the house like a parrot in the cage. He wants her to be an appendage to him. He gives her no opportunity to go outside. She is just a maid servant to cook food, to wash utensils etc. She is kept under lock and key in the house. What she suffers from is her loneliness especially at nights. Appanna's state is Apollonian as the 'Id' is following its pleasure principle with the acceptance of the 'Super Ego.' Rani tries to win the love of her husband in vain. He doesn't speak, if at all he does, it is just in mono syllabic.

Kurudavva, a friend of Rani's mother-in-law, sympathizes with her and gives Rani two magic roots which work as a love-philter. The small root given to Appanna brings some adverse effect on him. Rani makes paste of the second root but when she mixes it in the curry, it fumes and the curry turns blood-red. She thinks that either her husband may suspect her or the curry may become dangerous to him. Following the advice of the character, Story, while Appanna is in the bath room, she pours it into the ant-hill where there is a Cobra which tastes it. That incident becomes the turning point in the play.

The Cobra is quite unaware of the surroundings, though its ant hill is just beside Appanna's house. It doesn't even take note of the dog being brought there. Perhaps it lives without the sensuous feelings and lives like a complete reptile with Apollonian effect. Its senses are exposed to the world around, that is to say, to the human world when it tastes the curry, change begins in the mind which influences the body later. Due to the transposition of the mind and the body, the Cobra becomes Naga i.e., a human being who resembles Appanna, it is under the effect of Dionysian phase now. It understands that there is a beautiful woman, Rani, in the house alone at nights.

Now it is evident that, once, the Cobra lacks knowledge of the world outside its confined habitat. The tremendous change in the process of its vicious mind begins when Rani pours the potion mixed curry into the ant-hill and when the Cobra tastes it. It comes out and looks at Rani when the philter begins working. Thinking process which consists of questioning, reasoning, understanding, love, hate etc., begin in the Cobra's blank mind. It is the Dionysian concept. Therefore it does not move from under the tree till it becomes dark, even unmindful of the barking dog. Meanwhile it might notice the shouts of Appanna at Rani, also his locking the door from outside and leaving the place while Rani is inside. It might have also observed the crying of Rani. Now that the Cobra starts thinking like a human being and due to the above observations, it perceives the plight of Rani.

The powerful thinking human mind due to the effect of the potion shows its incredible impact on the reptile body and turns it into a human body that resembles Appanna's outward appearance and meets Rani. He is called 'Naga' now. Undoubtedly he meets Rani for sexual pleasure but the large share of refined human nature in the mind prepares her mentally for consummation and so Naga spends the whole night speaking and listening to her. Here the noticeable thing is the bodily impulses are controlled to some extent. On the other hand, Naga does not give up his reptile reminiscences completely. To praise Rani's hair he says, 'What a beautiful, long hair! Like dark, black, snake princesses.' Rani fails to perceive that Naga is not her husband, but 'a mirror tells no lies and hides no disguise.' When Rani opens the mirror box for some ointment the next day, to apply to the wounds of Naga who has received them during the fight with the dog brought by Appanna, she sees a Cobra there where Naga sits. But Naga manages it very cleverly.

After the transposition of the body and the mind, there is no self-alienation or Dionysian state in Naga. It is to say that there is the undifferentiated, unified body-mind called Apollonian state. It can be said so, as Naga never thinks of the future disasters of his consummation with Rani, especially as to what happens to her, in case she conceives. Though Rani finds difference between the daytime Appanna and the nighttime Appanna, she ignores it. That means the two yield to pleasure principle, the biological impulse of the (Sigmund Freud's) 'Id' and the 'Ego' succeeds in convincing the 'Super Ego' to follow the 'Id.' Thus there is no split between the mind and the body, thanks to the Apollonian effect. But the conflict begins when Rani tells him of her pregnancy. While in the human body owing to more percentage of human mind, Naga wants to save her from the disaster by asking her to go for 'the snake ordeal' and to speak the truth without clarifying what the truth is. And while in the snake body, with less percentage of human mind, he follows a certain norm that can't be avoided. It is to save Rani.

Appanna's anger finds no bounds when he learns that Rani has become pregnant. Rani can't understand why he is in such rage. He wants to kill her, but the Cobra attracts his attention. He does not think of the proverb, 'What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.' Rani's state is miserable. Naga who has pushed her into the mire, washed his hands off her saying that she should speak the truth while taking 'the snake ordeal.' Rani learns a little about a miracle, by the words of Kurudavva before the Village Elders and opts for 'the snake ordeal' that makes her a Goddess. Appanna is exhorted by the villagers to spend the rest of his life in her service and she is a gift for him due to the merit of many lives.

Rani gives birth to a male baby. The consolation and the wish of Naga that she would get everything have come true. By now Rani understands that the one who has visited her at nights is not her husband since 'no two men make love alike.' Appanna knows that he has never slept with Rani and feels that his life is worthless and yet he surrenders himself to the miracle and fate. One day the Cobra remembers Rani and to have a look at her, it enters the house through the usual hole. Rani is beside her husband with her head on his shoulders, her long black hair hangs down from the edge of the cot and there is a smile of contentment on her face, the Apollonian effect. Naga recoils with sudden anguish and covers his face as though it is something he can't bear to see. He feels that Rani is his own and so he can't see her in another man's arms and bed. He remembers how she behaves while making love. The agony due to jealousy is unbearable for him. Naturally, this is the other side of human nature. He decides to bite Rani on her breast to make her his own forever, but he waits. '*Datta, Dayadvam, Damyata....*' says the Upanishad. *Damyata* (control) brings a second thought. There is a swing from Dionysian to Apollonian and from Apollonian to Dionysian.

He oscillates between 'to be' and 'not to be' like Hamlet, between the 'Id' and the 'Super Ego.' At last the conflict ends with the dawn of realization. He finds that his love on Rani has sealed his lips and pulled out his fangs, the win of Apollonian. He is now no longer a King Cobra and even no better than a grass snake. Her thighs, her bosom, her lips are for a one who is a man forever but not for a transformed one who sheds his own skin every season and lives in the burrows and in ant-hills. Thinking so, he enters her long hair, plays with them, ties a tress into a noose and places it around his neck and dies.

Karnad has added the second ending; the Cobra withstands its desire of biting Rani, enters her hair to play with and decides to remain as a snake. The storm may blow away but the clouds still hover over Rani and Appanna's heads. Rani may curse herself for being to bed with other man since she knows pretty well that she has lost her chastity, of course unknowingly. Similarly, Appanna's heart may boil with the thought that the child is not born through him as he has never slept with Rani before the night of the ordeal. Yet both have to compromise in their minds with each other by accepting the child and so keeping the family together. Thus the play Naga-Mandala concludes with an Apollonian effect.

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