

The Force of Love and the Institution of Marriage: A Study of *The Guide*, *Candida*, and *Hayavadana*

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Abstract

The exploration of love and the institution of marriage has been a recurring theme in literature across cultures and epochs. It has been depicted as both a sanctified social contract and a restriction on personal freedom. The interplay between love and marriage, especially the ways in which love both disrupts and reaffirms the boundaries of marriage, has become a key concern for many authors. The works of R. K. Narayan, George Bernard Shaw, and Girish Karnad—*The Guide* (1958), *Candida* (1894), and *Hayavadana* (1971), respectively—offer profound insights into these themes. Through an exploration of these texts, we can see how love functions as a transformative, often rebellious, force against the confines of marriage. In this paper, we shall explore how each work presents love as a force that either challenges or subverts the institution of marriage. These three texts—while distinct in cultural, social, and historical context—share common themes in their exploration of love's potential to disrupt, redefine, and revolt against the norms of marital relationships. Furthermore, by examining the characters' relationships to love and marriage, we can understand the deeper philosophical questions these authors engage with, particularly concerning individual freedom, societal expectations, and human identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Love and marriage are two fundamental themes in the realm of human existence and artistic expression. They have often been portrayed as complementary forces in literature. Yet, numerous works challenge this assumption by presenting love as a force that either subverts or undermines the institution of marriage. R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*, Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, and Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* critically examine the complex interplay between love and marriage in different socio-cultural contexts. Each text highlights characters who, in different ways, resist the traditional expectations of marriage, showcasing how love can act as both a liberating and destabilizing force.

Narayan (1906-2001), one of India's most celebrated writers, is known for his rich depictions of Indian life and culture, particularly through his fictional town of Malgudi. Narayan's writing is characterized by a simplicity of style, which belies the complexity of his social and philosophical inquiries. His works explore the tension between individual desires and societal expectations, often examining characters who struggle with issues of identity, duty, and love. *The Guide*, written in 1958, is one of his most famous works, offering a nuanced portrayal of love, redemption, and the consequences of breaking away from societal norms. Narayan's

exploration of love's transformative potential within the constraints of marriage and social expectation remains central to understanding *The Guide*.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was an Irish playwright, critic, and social reformer. He is one of the most influential figures in modern drama. Known for his wit and for tackling societal issues, Shaw used his plays to critique Victorian morality and the institution of marriage. *Candida*, written in 1894, is one of Shaw's most significant works, in which he critiques the role of women within marriage and the societal expectations that dictate romantic relationships. Shaw's sharp humour and intellectual rigor provide a means of deconstructing the traditional power dynamics within marriage, offering a progressive view of love and partnership. Shaw's work is instrumental in shifting the focus of the play from mere romance to social commentary on gender roles, love, and marital expectations.

Girish Karnad (1938-2019) is a prominent playwright in Kannada literature. He was known for his exploration of myth, tradition, and the complexities of modern life. *Hayavadana*, written in 1971, combines folk traditions and modern existential questions, creating a complex narrative that questions the roles of identity and marriage. The play's innovative structure, which blends the mythical with the contemporary, presents love as a force that transcends the physical and psychological boundaries traditionally imposed by societal norms, particularly in the context of marriage. Karnad's work interrogates the limitations of the human self, particularly within the confines of social and marital structures.

In all three works, love serves as both a source of personal transformation and a challenge to the institution of marriage. The characters in these texts question and, in some cases, reject the societal expectations surrounding marriage, choosing instead to follow the complex and often contradictory paths dictated by love. Each of the protagonists—whether in *The Guide*, *Candida*, or *Hayavadana*—struggles with societal norms that seek to constrain love, offering an insightful critique of marriage as an institution that both defines and limits individual freedom.

R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* (1958) presents love as a compelling yet destructive force, particularly through the relationship between Raju and Rosie. Rosie, a married woman, falls in love with Raju, leading to a complex moral and emotional struggle. The novel critiques the rigid expectations of marriage in Indian society and explores how passion can transcend social norms while also leading to downfall.

Rosie's marriage to Marco is depicted as a union devoid of emotional fulfilment. Marco's academic pursuits overshadow his responsibilities as a husband, and he views Rosie's passion for dance as trivial. This is evident in:

"He had a profound contempt for all dancers. He thought they were street acrobats at best."
(*The Guide*, Ch. 4, p. 56)

Her relationship with Raju, in contrast, is based on admiration and emotional connection. However, this love is not without consequences. Rosie's decision to pursue her passion for dance, facilitated by Raju's encouragement, leads to social alienation and personal sacrifices. Ultimately, Raju's love for Rosie morphs into possessiveness, revealing the paradox of love's liberating yet confining power.

The theme of love's transformative power in *The Guide* can be seen as part of a larger literary tradition that views love as a redemptive force. Narayan's use of love as a means of self-discovery and spiritual awakening recalls the works of existentialist writers such as Jean-Paul

Sartre and Albert Camus, who explored the tension between personal freedom and societal expectation. In this sense, love in *The Guide* functions as a form of rebellion that allows individuals to transcend their circumstances and confront the deeper questions of existence.

Shaw's *Candida* (1894) presents a critical view of marriage and gender roles, particularly through the character of Candida, a woman caught between two men: her husband, the Reverend James Morell, and Eugene Marchbanks, a passionate young poet who falls in love with her. While Morell sees himself as a benevolent and intellectual figure, relying on Candida for emotional and domestic support, Eugene represents a more idealized and romantic view of love. Eugene's love for Candida is pure and untainted by societal expectations, offering a stark contrast to the functional, dutiful love that exists in her marriage.

In this play, Shaw presents love as a battleground for social and gender dynamics, particularly focusing on the roles of men and women within marriage. Shaw's portrayal of Candida, the wife of the Reverend James Morell, positions her as a strong, independent woman who challenges the traditional conception of marriage as a patriarchal institution. The play revolves around Candida's relationships with two men: her husband, Morell, and the young poet Eugene Marchbanks, who falls in love with her.

Shaw uses the tension between these two male characters to highlight the contradictions in the institution of marriage. Morell, though well-meaning, is depicted as a man who relies on Candida to fulfil the emotional and domestic duties that sustain his identity as a clergyman. His love for her is possessive, relying on the traditional view of marriage as an asymmetrical relationship where the wife plays a supportive, subservient role. He is an idealistic Christian Socialist, believes in the sanctity of marriage but fails to recognize his wife's individuality. Eugene, on the other hand, represents a more romantic, idealized conception of love. His love for Candida is pure and selfless, and he seeks to rescue her from the mundane responsibilities of marriage. He idealizes Candida as a goddess of love and passion. The central conflict arises when Marchbanks declares his love for Candida, challenging the very foundation of her marriage. Marchbanks says:

"You have stolen Candida from me. She loves me: she will take me instead of you."
(*Candida*, Act II, Line 210)

However, Candida's ultimate decision to remain with Morell is a critique of both Eugene's idealized love and the conventional institution of marriage. She recognizes that true love is not a simple matter of emotional attraction but involves a complex balancing of mutual respect, independence, and commitment. She says,

"I give myself to the weaker of the two."
(*Candida*, Act III, Line 410)

Shaw's portrayal of Candida as a woman who does not conform to either the traditional role of the submissive wife or the romanticized figure of the liberated lover challenges the norms of marriage and gender expectations. Love in *Candida* is thus portrayed as a force that requires compromise, maturity, and a recognition of the complexity of human relationships.

Throughout the play, Candida is portrayed as a strong, independent woman who is fully aware of the power dynamics at play in her relationships. Her marriage to Morell is one of mutual respect, but it also reveals the inherent flaws in traditional marital structures. Shaw's critique of marriage lies in the way it forces women into subservient roles, even when they possess intellect, agency, and independence. Candida's eventual decision to remain with Morell and

reject Eugene's idealized love challenges the conventional romantic notion of love as a force that is pure and untainted by duty and responsibility.

Shaw's *Candida* suggests that love within marriage can be a complex and multifaceted emotion. It is not simply a matter of romantic passion but also a deep sense of mutual respect, understanding, and emotional dependency. The play critiques the idealized notion of romantic love by showing how both Eugene's passion and Morell's intellectualism fail to comprehend Candida's needs fully. Shaw's feminist view of marriage is clear: love is not a one-dimensional force but a multifaceted relationship that requires both emotional and intellectual equality between partners.

Candida engages with the broader literary tradition of marriage comedies and critiques of the domestic sphere. Shaw's feminist approach aligns with the social and literary movements of his time, particularly the early feminist works of the 19th century, such as those by Mary Wollstonecraft. Shaw's critique of marriage is also reminiscent of the satirical works of Oscar Wilde, who used comedy to deconstruct social conventions and question traditional ideas of gender and love.

Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* (1971) presents a narrative that intertwines love with the existential question of identity, body, and mind. Rooted in Indian folklore and adapted from Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads*, the play questions whether the body or the mind defines love. The play focuses on a love triangle between Padmini, her husband Devadatta, and her lover Kapila. The complex dynamics of their relationships reveal how traditional notions of marriage and love are disrupted when identity itself is questioned. The play explores themes of body, mind, and soul, using a mythical structure to highlight the psychological and emotional turmoil that love can create when it operates outside the prescribed boundaries of marriage.

The plot of *Hayavadana* involves a miraculous and tragic accident: Devadatta and Kapila, two close friends, accidentally switch their bodies—Devadatta's intellectual and physically weak body is exchanged with Kapila's strong but simple one. Padmini, who is torn between the two men, must choose between the intellectual qualities of Devadatta and the physical strength of Kapila. She admires Devadatta's intellect but is physically drawn to Kapila. Padmini's love is divided between her husband, Devadatta, and his friend, Kapila. This dilemma culminates in a supernatural incident where the two men's heads are transposed, forcing Padmini to confront the absurdity of her desires. As the play progresses, Padmini's decision becomes increasingly complicated, and she ultimately chooses the body of Devadatta over the mind, thus highlighting a profound crisis of identity. Padmini's assertion of her agency is evident when she refuses to accept a conventional resolution. Instead of submitting to societal expectations, she seeks an unconventional path. Padmini says:

"A woman's desires don't fit into your neat little moralities."
(*Hayavadana*, Act II, Line 312)

Karnad uses this mythic narrative to criticize the conventional structure of marriage and love. Marriage in the traditional sense—as an institution designed to promote societal stability and continuity—becomes meaningless when the individual's identity and selfhood are fragmented. The play critiques the reductive nature of societal definitions of identity, particularly in marriage, where the wife is expected to accept her husband in a singular, prescribed form. Padmini's desire for a new identity, shaped by her love for both men, undermines the monolithic concept of marriage. Her emotional and physical connections with both men reveal

the multiplicity of human desires that cannot be confined to the conventional expectations of marriage.

The love in *Hayavadana* serves as a subversion of marriage, questioning its role as a boundary for self-expression. As Padmini struggles with her love for Devadatta's intellectual self and Kapila's physicality, the play highlights a central paradox: that love can transcend the physical and mental dualities that the institution of marriage tries to maintain. Karnad's representation of love as a force that challenges identity and human relations shows that love cannot be confined by the boundaries of marriage. Instead, love in *Hayavadana* becomes a vehicle for exploring deeper, more existential questions about the self and the mind-body connection.

Karnad's *Hayavadana* can be seen as a modern retelling of traditional Indian myths and plays. His blending of folk traditions and modern existentialism echoes the works of writers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, who grappled with questions of identity and the meaning of existence. The idea of the body and mind split is also reminiscent of the Cartesian dualism explored by René Descartes. By reinterpreting traditional mythology and infusing it with modern psychological concerns, Karnad creates a narrative where love's force leads to a crisis of identity, reflecting a broader existential question about human experience and its limitations.

All three authors—Narayan, Shaw, and Karnad—depict love as a force that resists the institution of marriage in different ways. For Narayan, love is a pathway to self-realization, freeing individuals from societal constraints. Shaw critiques marriage as an unequal partnership, especially in its treatment of women. Karnad, on the other hand, delves into the metaphysical implications of love, showing how the disruption of identity through love challenges not only marriage but the very conception of human existence.

Though the works of Narayan, Shaw, and Karnad differ in terms of cultural and historical context, they share universal concerns about the nature of marriage and the role of love. Each author critiques marriage as a social institution that may limit personal growth and autonomy, particularly in relation to gender roles and societal expectations.

In the case of Narayan's *The Guide*, love's ability to provide spiritual fulfilment challenges the rigid, often transactional nature of marriage. Narayan's critique of the institution is framed within the context of Indian society, where arranged marriages and societal duties often take precedence over individual desires. Raju's liberation from the traditional framework of marriage is significant, as it highlights the tension between societal expectations and the need for personal fulfilment.

In Shaw's *Candida*, the critique of marriage is framed within the context of Victorian England, a society where gender roles were strictly enforced and where women were expected to fulfil subservient roles within marriage. Shaw's portrayal of Candida as a woman who asserts her independence within her marriage challenges traditional notions of marriage, suggesting that true love requires mutual respect and equality, not just duty and submission. Shaw uses the play to question the restrictive nature of marital roles, particularly for women, and calls for a redefinition of love in the context of gender equality.

Karnad's *Hayavadana* takes a more philosophical and existential approach to love and marriage, moving beyond the personal into the metaphysical. The play critiques the traditional notion of marriage by showing how identity and love cannot be confined by the physical and mental distinctions that marriage often attempts to uphold. In the Indian cultural context, Karnad's play challenges the concept of identity that is often tied to the institution of marriage, urging a reconsideration of the rigid categories that society imposes on the self.

Despite their differing approaches, all three authors underscore the limitations of marriage as an institution. Narayan, Shaw, and Karnad critique marriage from different angles—Narayan from the perspective of personal freedom and spiritual awakening, Shaw from a feminist standpoint, and Karnad from an existential and philosophical viewpoint. However, each work emphasizes love's capacity to transcend the confines of marriage, whether through self-realization, equality, or the redefinition of identity.

The force of love and the institution of marriage in *The Guide*, *Candida*, and *Hayavadana* can be understood through an intertextual lens that connects these works to broader literary traditions and social contexts.

1. **The Romantic Tradition:** All three works engage with the Romantic notion of love as a transformative force that transcends the boundaries of social norms. In *The Guide*, Raju's love for Rosie parallels the Romantic ideal of passionate, unrestrained love. Similarly, Eugene's love for Candida in Shaw's play reflects the Romantic vision of a pure, idealized love that defies social expectations. In *Hayavadana*, the crisis of identity and love's challenge to traditional roles mirrors the Romantic preoccupation with the conflict between individual desire and societal constraints.
2. **Feminist Critiques of Marriage:** In Shaw's *Candida* and Karnad's *Hayavadana*, marriage is critiqued from a feminist perspective, with both works questioning the traditional roles ascribed to women within the institution of marriage. Candida's refusal to conform to the passive, dependent role of a wife in Shaw's play highlights the ways in which marriage has historically confined women. In *Hayavadana*, Devadatta's wife is forced to choose between two men who embody different ideals of masculinity, and her struggle underscores the limitations placed on women in patriarchal societies.
3. **Existential Themes:** Both Narayan and Karnad engage with existential questions about identity, meaning, and the self. In *The Guide*, Raju's journey is one of self-discovery through his relationship with Rosie, while in *Hayavadana*, the characters' struggles with love and identity point to the absurdity of human existence. Both works depict love as a force that can either help individuals confront the meaninglessness of life or propel them toward self-realization.

In *The Guide*, *Candida*, and *Hayavadana*, love emerges as a force capable of both liberating individuals from the confines of marriage and questioning the very nature of identity. Through their exploration of love's transformative power, Narayan, Shaw, and Karnad challenge the societal and cultural norms that define and regulate marriage. Each work, while unique in its treatment of love and marriage, reveals the complex ways in which love intersects with personal autonomy, societal expectations, and the quest for self-realization.

For Narayan, love is a means of spiritual redemption that transcends the constraints of social norms, while Shaw critiques the unequal power dynamics of marriage, particularly as they relate to gender. Karnad, on the other hand, delves into the metaphysical dimensions of love and identity, suggesting that love can transcend the boundaries imposed by both the body and the mind.

The shared theme of rebellion against the institution of marriage in these three works speaks to a larger cultural conversation about the role of love in human relationships. By examining the interplay between love, marriage, and identity, Narayan, Shaw, and Karnad offer profound critiques of the ways in which societal structures seek to define and limit human desires.

Ultimately, their works invite readers to question the assumptions surrounding love and marriage, and to reconsider the possibility of love as a force for personal and societal transformation.

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