

## Political Issues in the Plays of Vijay Tendulkar

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### Abstract:

*In the post-independent era the Indian drama has undergone some significant changes with the changed social system, values and export-import of thoughts. Cultural, political, socio-economic, moral changes of society have introduced different dimensions of theme and style to Indian drama. From the forth decade of twentieth century the sense of realism came into the Marathi drama as a reaction of the problems those have been faced by the modern society. In this period new additions to themes with various new experiments on style, Vijay Tendulkar has extended the area of Marathi drama. Vijay Tendulkar, the well-known Marathi playwright has received a national repute for his thought provoking plays. Specially, Tendulkar tackles the issues of politics in several of his plays. This study is an attempt to analyse the political issues in three major political plays by Tendulkar, 'Ghasiram Kotwal', 'Dambadwipcha Mukabala' and 'Niyateehya Bailala'*

**Keywords:** Vijay Tendulkar, Political issues, Ghasiram Kotwal, Dambadwipcha Mukabala, Niyateehya Bailala.

### 1. Introduction:

Vijay Tendulkar is a playwright of national repute. He started his career with *Gruhastha* (Householder, 1947) and established himself in the field of drama with *Shrimant* (The Rich, 1956). The wickedness of the upper class people to retain self-respect finds its due reflection in the play *Shrimant*. In the play, an unmarried girl decides to give birth a child. Therefore, her so called rich father tries to buy a husband for her to maintain his social reputation. To establish himself and survive as a playwright, Tendulkar in his life time had to encounter several questions from the upper class society of Bombay (Mumbai).

Tendulkar has 28 long stage plays, 20 children plays and several one act plays to his credit. He fascinated plays loving audience for last five decades. He emphasized on the depiction of society and its class-caste-gender bias, power politics and hypocrisy. Instead of propagating idealism, Tendulkar involved himself for the sake of art only. The society where Tendulkar lived and social issues that he faced are artistically criticised by him through the plays like *Gruhastha* (Householder), *Shrimant* (The Rich) *Manas Nawate Bet* (An Island Named 'Man'), *Madhalya Bhinti* (Middle Walls), *Chimnyacha Ghar Hot Menacha* (The Wax house of the Sparrow), *Mi Jinkalo, Mi Haralo* (I Won, I Lost), *Kawalyanchi Shala* (School for Crows), *Sari Ga Sari* ( Drizzle O Drizzle), *Ek Hatti Mulgi*

(An Obstinate Girl), *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* (Silence! The Court is in Session), *Jhala Anant Hanumant* (Anant Turned Hanumant), *Dambadwipcha Mukabala* (An Encounter in Umbugland), *Gidhade* (The Vultures), *Ashi Pakhare Yeti* (So Come Birds), *Sakharam Binder* (Sakharam, The Binder), *Bhalya Kaka* (Bhalya Uncle), *Gharte Amuche Chan* (Nice is Our Nest), *Ghasiram kotwal*, *Bebi*, *Bhao Muararrao*, *Pahije Jatiche* (It Has to Be in One's Blood), *Mitrachi Goshta* (A Friend's Story), *Kamala*, *Kanyadaan*, *Vitthala* (The God), *Chiranjeev Saubhagya kankshini*, *Safar* (The Cyclist), *Niyateechya Bailala* (To Hell with the Bull of the Fate), *Footpayricha Samrat* (Sidewalk Emperor) etc.

Tendulkar introduced his own style of playwriting in the play *Gidhade*. The play is based on moral degradation, family infrastructure and humiliation. Here he explains several forms of humiliation- family, sexual, caste and political. During seven to eight decade of Twentieth century Tendulkar wrote well-known plays like *Sakharam Binder* (1972), *Ghasiram Kotwal* (1973) and *Dambadwipcha Mukabala* (1974). In *Sakharam Binder* Tendulkar portrays the dominance of male gender over the female. *Ghasiram Kotwal* is a political satire. The story is based on Eighteenth century Poona (Pune). In *Dambadwipacha Mukabala* the power politics and fight for power to rule the state is depicted.

## 2. Methods of Study:

The sole aim of this study is to emphasize on political treatment such as power politics, politics for self interests, politics for throne in Vijay Tendulkar's plays. In this study entitled '*Treatment of Political Issues in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar*', the analytical method has been mainly used to analyse the political treatment of the playwright Vijay Tendulkar. Introductory and descriptive methods have also been used where necessary.

The data for the study has been collected from both of primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been collected from the texts of selected plays and the secondary data has been collected from different books, theses, journals of different scholars.

## 3. Political Issues Depicted:

Literature is reflection of society. It portrays the curves of social changes. Society and politics are strongly highlighted in Tendulkar's plays. But, he never tried to propagate any social theory. Tendulkar opined in an interview-

*I have not written about hypothetical pain or rerated imaginary word of sorrow. I am from a middle class family and I have seen the brutal ways of life by keeping my eyes open. My work has come from within me, as an outcome of my observation of the world in which I live.*<sup>1</sup>

*Ghasiram Kotwal* is a remarkable achievement of Tendulkar. *Ghasiram Kotwal* is a political satire. The background of the play is the ruling period of the Peshwas in Eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Although the plot is taken from history, the importance is given on portrayal of social injustice and hypocrisy. Tendulkar has strictly pointed out that *Ghasiram Kotwal* is not a historical play, it is only a play.<sup>3</sup> In a discussion, Samik Benarjee says regarding the theme and form of the play-

*Ghasiram started with a theme, then come the specific 'story' or incident, which was historical and then, the search for the form began... by a series of accidents I discovered the present form which is a combination of a variety of ingredients from different folk forms of Maharashtra.*<sup>4</sup>

'Ghasiram' is a representative character of immorality in Indian politics. In other sense, through Ghasiram, Tendulkar draw a sketch of moral degradation in Indian politics. The Peshwas were the last rulers of Maharashtra. In colonial period the Peshwas had a well establishment. The British dominated them in the last period and the traditional thoughts were collapsed down in the hand of upper caste Brahmins under colonisers. But Tendulkar never intended to portray a particular period. It is a state which is neither new nor old. It is beyond any time and place limit.

The story starts with coming of Brahmin Ghasiram to Pune for the first time and discards and disgraces by the upper class Brahmins which made him hostile to the city. He becomes impatient to take revenge. He offers his young daughter Gauri to Peshwas' chief General and justice Nana Phadnavis to trap him and gets the post of 'Kotwal' (chief policeman). Ghasiram takes control over all the judicial power of the city. He spares no time to find out his offenders but he does not understand that Nana Phadnavis is using him as a shield against the Brahmins. Gradually he turns into a slave of Nana. Nana even manages to do some antisocial works by the help of Ghasiram. Day by day, Ghasiram becomes more brutal over the Brahmins and Nana is busy with young Gauri. One day Ghasiram comes to know about suspicious death of Gauri and Nana marries for the ninth time. Being mad in anger Ghasiram reminds Nana that life of Gauri was merely a payment to acquire power and pity. In the mean time, the Brahmins unitedly voice for freedom from brutality of Ghasiram and demand his death. Nana normally signs up in death order of Ghasiram, as usually as he did when he made him Kotwal. Finally, Ghasiram is killed and a crowd of people surrounds him.

The main character Ghasiram was a poor Brahmin from Kanowj who comes to Pune in search of a job. In first appearance Ghasiram has not any ambition. He is worried about survival of his family in the communal society of Pune. Tendulkar intelligently displays the tragic death of Ghasiram through degradation of humanity and morality in his character.

Under Nana's advocacy Ghasiram's brutality on the Brahmins has begun-

*Ghasiram: Bastards- stealing the Kotwal's fruit. (Goes out on his horse. The armies put the Brahmins in a cell offstage and shut and lock an imaginary door on stage.)*<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Nana announces Ghasiram's order of death-

*Nana: Ladies and gentlemen. Citizens of Poona. A threat to the great city of Poona has been ended today. (The crowd cheers). A disease has been controlled. The demon Ghasya Kotwal, who plagued all of us, has met his death. Everything has happened according to the wishes of the Gods. The mercy of the gods is with us always.*<sup>6</sup>

Tendulkar's consciousness towards different political conspiracy results the play *Dambadwipcha Mukabala* (Encounter in Umbugland). The play is a snapshot of political condition and politics for the throne in the sixth decade of twentieth century. In the play

human value, sexual politics and social relation along with power politics have been analyses. Arondhoti Benarjee has found the game of politics and human covetous nature for power in the play and says-

*But the play is not merely topical, it unveils the essential nature of the game of politics and also is the basic craving for power in human nature.<sup>7</sup>*

The play highlights on 'Vijaya', the daughter of self-willed king 'Vichitravirya'. The representative characteristic of gender politics and power politics has been found in *Dambadwipcha Mukabala*. *Dambadwipcha Mukabala* is a theatrical form of the sorrows and sufferings of people from grass root level.

King Vichitravirya offered proper respect to Vratyasom, Bhagadanta, Karkashirsha and Aranyaketu. His ministry was hypocritical. Vratyasom opines politics as a game-

*Vratyasom- Let us not open our mouths too wide about principles and honesty. To observe these two virtues in politics is as inappropriate and stupid as celibacy after marriage. You and I are politicians and ministers; in blunt terms, what does that mean? Eh, Pishtakeshi? It means we are partners in a most profitable game of skulduggery.<sup>8</sup>*

The two 'pen bearers' narrates the story and incidents amidst the play. The competition for power has been expressed in their lyrical dialogue-

*THE TOW [in unison]  
SERIOUS CRISIS! SERIOUS CRISIS!  
[Turn by turn]  
No decision.  
The scales are equal.  
Whom to give the power to?  
Each one's a rascal.<sup>9</sup>*

The ministers are worried about the heir of the throne after King Vichitravirya. Suddenly they decides to put Vichitravirya's daughter Vijaya on the throne-

*Vratyasom- Pishtakeshi! Found at last!  
Vijaya- Who?  
Vratyasom- Found our compromise!  
Vijaya [confused] W- what?  
Vratyasom- Meet our new leader! [Vijaya shrinks] His majesty's heir! This one in front of us behind! She'll be the rule, we'll be the rulers! An excellent plan till we agree on a firm decision.<sup>10</sup>*

After sitting in the throne Vijaya receives obstructions in her works from the ministry. Including Vratyasom, the ministers expect to rule the state making Vijaya merely a puppet. The experienced Vratyasom and other ministers are engaged in the game for power. The ministers persuade the common people against the queen. They rejects queen's proposal for re-establishment of 'Kadamba' caste people. Finally, the queen not only desist the rebellious mass but also manages the ministers. The whole incident is termed as 'miracle' in the news papers.

In the play the relationship of lord and his ministry has been depicted vividly with a humanistic approach. *Dambadwipcha Mukabala* is a play with a subject of politics and

power and demonstrates a good example of degradation of moral values in the competition to gain the power.

*Niyateechya Bailala* is another play with a subject of politics. The wickedness of the government people and indifference of the common people is reflected in the play. *Niyateechya Bailala* is a dramatisation of oppression by the political leaders through self interest and advantage.

The play is divided into two Acts and has only two characters. The subject matter of the play is expressed through the conversation of these two characters 'A' and 'B'. The wickedness of party switching political leaders is expressed in 'B's dialogue-

*I have been in power for last twenty two years. I was minister for seven times. I was the chief minister for two times. Both governing parties are now not in power. I was the only person to become a chief minister in the opposition party. Again, I switched to my party and became chief minister.*<sup>11</sup>

The tendency to keep the opposition party in hand for smooth running of the government is reflected in 'A's dialogue regarding 'B'. After gaining power 'B' is seemed to be engaged with immoral works including bring the opposition party in control and tries to hide the whole matter by power-

*Being in the party, he writes about land scandal! He dares so much!.... It is better to buy instead of quarrelling with him. It is better to judge what he wants.*<sup>12</sup>

It seems to be natural for a politician to become mean for the sake of power. They do not even hesitate to take the help of murder, malice and injustice to attain the power. In the play 'B' exhibits meanness to attain the power that he had lost in the hands of 'A' -

*For the sake of true politics I do everything. I have done murder also. (he gives a crooked smile) I am born for the power.*<sup>12</sup>

In the whole play the playwright intends to offer a picture of political rivalry through the dispute between 'A' and 'B'. 'A' and 'B' both are engaged to snatch the power from each other.

Besides these above discussed plays, *Bhao Murarao*, another play by Tendulkar shows a little interest in political life. *Bhao Murrarao* is a psycho- analytical play. In the play the dispute between Sindhkar (once who donated kidney to Murarao) and Murarao has been depicted. Minister Murarao fails to recognise Sindhkar who once saved his life.

#### 4. Conclusion:

Literature is formed on the basis of society. Some facts and factors are entirely involved in each and every literary creation. Human is social creature and literature is reflection of his thinking and social activities. Economic, Cultural, Political environment of a society takes a significant role as a factor in the creation of literature and the society also supplies form and styles. Society provides matter and manner both to the literature. Literature holds the contemporary and gradual changing patterns of the society.

The dream of India for freedom was broken down just after Independence. The nasty politics had grown up soon. Some power thirsty politicians have become threat to the society. The whole society becomes their victim. Vijay Tendulkar started writing from the

sixth decade of twentieth century. He felt the political condition of Maharashtra as well as worst system of Indian bureaucracy. He started depicting socio-political issues in his plays artistically. The study of his plays reveals that the real human life and its joys and sorrows are inspiration of Tendulkar's plays. This portrayal of socio-political experiences offers an idea of the social life of post-independent India.

### Notes:

- [1] <http://www.passionforcinema.com/a-conversation-with-sir-vijay-tendulkar/>
- [2] [http://www.en.wikipedia.org/vijay\\_tendulkar/](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/vijay_tendulkar/)
- [3] Shoma Choudhari & Gita Rajan (ed.), *Vijay Tendulkar*, A-3 Sorvodaya Enclave, New Delhi-17: 'Katha', 2001, p. 132
- [4] *ibid.* pp. 122-129
- [5] Chandrasekhar Kambar (ed.). *Ghasiram Kotwal, Modern Indian Plays*, Volume-I, New Delhi-1: National School of Drama, 2000, p.453
- [6] *ibid.* p.459
- [7] Beena Agarwal. *Dramatic World of Vijay Tendulkar*, Jaipur: Aadi publication, 2010, p. 122
- [8] Vijay Tendulkar. *Encounter in Ubugland, Five Plays*, Oxford House, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1992, Act-I, p.273
- [9] *ibid.* p. 291
- [10] *ibid.* p. 293
- [11] Vijay Tendulkar. *Niyatechya Bailala*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1992. Act-I, p. 4
- [12] *ibid.* p.19

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