

A comparative study of power politics and Violence in plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar

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Abstract - The present study is a modest attempt to deal with the plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar especially the themes and techniques in them. The contemporary Indian playwright's like Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad have played a significant role in the development of Indian drama. These are the torch-bearers of this genre. They have made bold innovations and experiments and have dealt with the themes related to the present social scenario, in an effort to bring about social change and a social cultural revolution to make the people aware of the need to renew the social structure and march towards a better social system. the plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar reveals that sex, struggle and zest for political power, violence and the instinct of selfishness are the major themes or the core areas of the selected plays.

Keywords – Power Politics, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Development, Indian Drama.

I. INTRODUCTION

The plays have been selected on the notion of uniformity. Six outstanding plays of Girish Karnad, based on history, folktales and myths have been considered for this study. Outstanding six plays of the second phase of the career of Vijay Tendulkar have been selected for this study. The criterion for this selection is the compatibility with the thematic concerns. The study attempts to inspect the role of power and power politics in the plays of Karnad and Tendulkar. Tendulkar was a versatile writer. Apart from these plays he wrote film-scripts, novels, short stories, literature for the children, journalistic writing, translations, adaptations and essays. There are many identical themes in the plays of Karnad and Tendulkar who have Indian stage-theatre and screen world to their heart. Karnad has acted in the films which are based on the scripts of Tendulkar like 'Manthan', 'Ardhasatya' and 'Umbaratha'. Tendulkar has translated Girish Karnad's Tughlaq into Marathi. Both the dramatists have made a contribution to the Indian Literature and make some changes in the art of writing. They have made considerable role to the Indian National Theatre Movement. Their plays are not based on the value of entertainment but they provoke the audience to think. They are contemporary writers and both of them share the contemporary social and national concerns of the country Vijay Tendulkar uses chronological figures like Nana

Phadnavis and Ghashiram Kotwal in his play Ghashiram Kotwal in order to explain how the political persons like Nanas use Ghashirams like pawns and heave them gone when their intention is over. Like Nana, Aazam is in Girish Karnad's Tughlaq. He is used as a pawn. Tughlaq uses Sheikh Imam-ud-din also in the same compartment. In tidy to get clout, Ghashiram surrenders his daughter to Nana Phadnavis. Tughlaq kills his father, brother and step-mother in regulate to expand the supremacy. These persons do not vacillate to use the blood kindred for their gluttony to manipulate power. In both the plays power is acquired through bloodshed. Sex, violence and voracity are the major themes in the plays of Karnad and Tendulkar.

II. POWER POLITICS AND POLITICAL POWER

Power politics and political power are at the centre in the plays of GirishKarnad and Vijay Tendulkar. There is the politics of power and the constant and human relationship is demonstrated in the plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar through gender. The plays of both the writers focus directly on the position of women in a patriarchal society. In patriarchy power lies in the hands of men. Women grieve, they suffer but they do not act unless it is motivated by men. In Girish Karnad's plays the female characters are victims of power even though they belong to different socio-economic backgrounds, two of them are

defeated mothers who must weep over their lost sons; both remain nameless. The Sultan's stepmother is worried about the Sultan too much. The Sultan is horrified by her complicity in the killing of his advisor and she is punished by the Sultan and she is stoned to death. The main reason of the murder of the Sultan's advisor is not her love for the Sultan but her lust for power, the power over the Sultan. Moreover the dual role played by Muhammad convincingly resembles the politicians of the contemporary world. The craftiness of the Sultan is similar to the trickery and meanness adopted by those in power to demolish the opponents, and also that of the opponents to destroy the rulers. In India after Independence, especially in the eighties, the longing to rule by all means and the urge of the aspirants to put an end to the incumbent rulers was and is as true as it was during the reign of Tughlaq. In Tughlaq, the administrators behaved indifferently and caused a lot of inconvenience to the subjects by demanding bribes from them. Even in the present times, millions of rupees are spent to check the natural calamities and for the upliftment of poor and the depressed, but their condition remains the same as most of the money is swindled by the politicians and administrators. The state of affairs of today's India is in no way different from that of the conditions that prevail during the reign of Tughlaq. Tughlaq resembles to particular phases in the political experiences of India.

Power Politics and Caste System in India

Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar, both of them belong to India and as the power politics in India is based on the class and caste distinction it is inevitable that it should be reflected in their plays. In Girish Karnad's *Yayati*, Sharmistha is treated as a slave by Devayani as she belongs to the Rakshasa community. Even Sharmistha's father has told her to be the slave of Devayani. When the blouses are exchanged Devayani is very furious and she abuses Sharmistha and passes staunch comments that no one can uplift one's status by wearing the clothes of others. The violent behavior and the treatment of Devayani make Sharmistha to take revenge on her. In Tughlaq, the Sultan has intermingled politics with the religion. He has given the orders that every Muslim should pray Namaz for five times daily. He wants that in his sovereignty the Muslims and Hindus are to be treated at equal level. He has stopped incriminating the Hindus the age old Jiziya tax. In the play *Hayavadana*, Devadatta and Padmini belong to Brahmin community whereas Kapila a son of Lohita is a blacksmith. Being belonging to subordinate community, he serves Devadatta and Padmini. Though he is friend of Devadatta, he accepts that he is inferior to him and commences all the actions which are told to him by Devadatta and Padmini. In the play *Tale-Danda*, the class-discrepancy and caste-discrepancy is at centre. When 'Mandal Commission' published its reports a lot of student's agitation took place. In addition to that after the Babari Mosque issue the secularism in India was in danger and Karnad wrote *Tale-*

Danda on this background. Basavanna, the protagonist of *Tale-Danda* tries to establish a movement and a new sect Lingayatism in which he expects that the people from all the communities should encompass and participate. The movement becomes a success and a marriage in between a Brahmin girl and a cobbler boy takes place. But due to this marriage conformist and orthodox minded people like Sovideva (King Bijjala's son), Manchanna Kramita and DamodaraBhatt oppose the movement. Sovideva gives orders to overwhelm the movement of Sharanas. In the play, *The Fire and the Rain*, the caste system is also focused on by Girish Karnad. Arvasu is in fond of performing the dramatic activities. But he is not allowed by his brother Parvasu. It is assumed that only the persons belonging to lower caste community should participate in dramatic activities. In the prologue to *The Fire and the Rain*, the actor- manager requests Parvasu to perform the play but he is in short of an actor. He tells Parvasu that the sons of the Bharata were the First actors in the history of theatre. They were Brahmin but lost their caste because of their profession. Arvasu the protagonist of the play loves a hunter girl Nittilai but the marriage does not take place. Nittilai is made to marry a boy from her community. When Nittilai runs away with Arvasu, she is killed by Nittilai's brother and husband. A very big fire ceremony is organized for rains but only Brahmins are allowed to enter to the court of the fire. In Tendulkar's plays also the class- distinction and caste- distinction is focused on. In *Gidhade*, Jagannath the gardener is trampled by Ramakant as he demands his salary. In *Sakharam Binder*, Laxmi does not allow Dawood, a Muslim friend of Sakharam to take part in the aarti of Lord Ganesha. Sakharam dislikes this and he blows Laxmi with his belt. For Sakharam, the class distinction and caste distinction do not matter because he does not dillydally to share a chillum with his Muslim friend Dawood. Nevertheless he does not ask any woman about her caste to which he brings his home on contractual basis. In the play *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the power is in the hands of Brahmins of Poona. In the reign of the Brahmins a poor Brahmin who comes from outside is suppressed. The insiders treat outsiders as if they are their slaves. The only non- Brahmin character in the play is the dancer woman Gulabi. In the play *Kamala*, Kamala is bought by Jaisingh Jadhav from the skin market of Lohardaga. Kamala belongs to adivasi community. She is used by Jaisingh Jadhav just a ladder to his success and is thrown away in an asylum when his purpose is over. The most controversial play of Tendulkar regarding the caste system in India is his *Kanyadan*. A daughter of a Brahmin social reformist marries a Mahar boy and the things become very complex. Arun Athawale, the husband of Jyoti, though educated is unemployed. He has seen how his father used to drink and beat his mother in his childhood. He has also seen the poverty and the consequences for poverty right from his childhood. It has turned him into an angry young man and he wants to put the whole world on the fire. The violent thoughts of this

untouchable boy are the results of the inhuman treatment given by the upper class society to the untouchable's years to years. But the treatment given to Jyoti by Arun Athawale is also inherent. One cannot advocate and support the behaviour of Arun Athawale. In the plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar, sometimes the suppressed people accept the age old tradition but in some of the plays they react and oppose the caste system. In *Yayati*, Sharmistha takes revenge on Devayani by throwing Devayani into the well and later by molesting her husband Yayati. In *Tale-Danda*, the people from Brahmin community as well as from cobbler community join the movement. A Brahmin girl is ready to accept a cobbler boy as her life-partner. In *The Fire and the Rain*, Arvasu is ready to accept a hunter girl as his wife. Nittilai does not worry about the rules and regulations of her community and she runs away with Arvasu leaving her husband behind. In Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal*, Ghashiram takes revenge on the Brahmins of Poona as he is suppressed by them. In *Kanyadan* Arun Athawale takes revenge on the Brahmin community by suppressing his wife Jyoti. Both of the playwrights are great humanists because they want an ideal society beyond the caste, creed, religion and the gender of the person. They are of the opinion that everyone should be treated equally on the human ground. Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* and Basavanna and Vijay Tendulkar's *Nath Devalalikar* are the representatives of this ideal society. In power politics as the role of gender and caste is important same is the case with political power.

Girish Karnad's *Yayati*, *Tughlaq*, *Tale-Danda* and *The Fire and the Rain* are based on political power. *Yayati* uses his political power in molesting a beautiful woman like Sharmistha. Being cursed by Shukracharya, by using his political power he wishes to exchange his old age to a young man from his subjects. But he fails to do so and unluckily his son Pooru exchanges it. In the play *Tughlaq*, the Sultan uses his political power to establish a new society where Muslims and Hindus are treated equally but he fails. In order to achieve the political power, he murders his father and brother and after gaining political power he kills those persons who create obstacles in his rule. His decisions like shifting the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad and introduction of silver currency are but total failure. In *Tale-Danda*, Bijjala uses his political power to support the movement of Basavanna whereas Sovideva, Bijjala's son uses the power to crush down the movement. He forcefully seizes the crown of the Kingdom from his father and put the king and queen in the prison. By using his political power, he punishes severely the persons involved in the inter-caste marriage of Sheelvant and Kalavati. In *The Fire and the Rain*, Parvasu the main priest of the fire ceremony has got the political power. By using his political power, he kills his father and makes Arvasu to accept the offence on his own and he maltreats everyone, even his wife Vishakha. Yavakri is not happy with decision of the King as he has

shouldered the responsibility of the Fire ceremony to Parvasu. Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* is the best example in which political power is at the centre of the play. At the beginning Nana Phadnav is the centre of political power and with it he behaves as he likes. But it is Ghashiram to whom Nana gives the political power through *Kotwalship*. As Ghashiram becomes the *Kotwal* he starts taking revenge. In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the political power is used not for the upliftment of the society but for suppressing the society and for the fulfillment of revenge motto. The play exposes that the power corrupts if it goes in hands of a scornful person. In *Kamala*, Jaisingh Jadhav buys an adivasi woman to prove that the women can be bought and sold in the skin market. But after the press-conference, Jaisingh is dismissed from his job because the persons who have political power are involved in the skin market. They force the master of Jaisingh to dismiss him from the job. Among all the discussed plays only *Tughlaq* wants to utilize his political power for the upliftment of the poor and for building the ideal society in which the people of all the communities treated in the equal manner. Otherwise all the remaining political powered persons in the selected plays use it for their own sake.

Violence

Violence is part and parcel of plays of Girish Karnad as well as those of Vijay Tendulkar. The separation of the Indian society into various castes and creeds, the discrimination made to the lower class people, suppression of the poor, revenge motif, lust for power, envy for infancy and ex-marital relationship are some of the basic causes of violence in the plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar. In *Yayati*, Sharmistha is anxious with the clarification of Devayani since she mentions Sharmistha's caste and origin. The violent Sharmistha takes Devayani to a well and throws her inside. Devayani's nuptial with Yayati disturbs Sharmistha psychologically and she takes the retribution on Devayani by seducing Yayati. Psychological disturbance and disorder makes Sharmistha to commit a sin of seduction. Devayani is disturbed by Sharmistha's behavior and as revenge she requests her father to curse Yayati. Chitrlekha dies due to her no fault. It is Pooru's acceptance of his father's old age makes him and his wife victim of the fate. It is the greed of Yayati and sexual behavior of Sharmistha create the situations which are violent. There are more violent actions in the play *Tughlaq* than the play *Yayati*. The play is packed with intrigues, maneuvers, machinations, butchery, terrible murders and horror. There is a long chain of dishonesty, treachery, betrayal and violence. Sheikh Imam-ud-din, Ain-ul-Mulk, Sihab-ud-din, the Sultan's stepmother, Najib, the Sultan's father and brother are the major characters who die during the play on and off the stage. His kingdom is transferred keen on a kitchen of demise and he becomes the lord of skin. In the play *Tughlaq* religion is intermingled with the power politics and when the violence comes at the

religious level it is more precarious and a lot of carnage is there. The mad decision of changing the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad with its subject gives a lot of scope to the violence the rogues like Aziz and Aazam suit flourishing in killing Ghiyas-up-din. While writing the play Tughlaq Karnad has studied the historical references and used them freely in the play Tughlaq. The violence in Hayavadana is based on sacrifice. In Indian tradition cruelty is at the pedestal because for the establishment of civilizations the struggle is necessary. Hayavadana himself wants freedom from his horse head. Devadatta promises to sacrifice his head and hands and he becomes successful in surrendering his head. Kapila sacrifices his head because Devadatta has sacrificed. Due to Padmini both the characters become alive but at last they have to die. The violence in Hayavadana is based on superstitious nature of Indian people. In Tendulkar's plays, masculinity, violence and power politics is at the centre. In Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe, there is a lot of verbal violence. At the very entry of Leela Benare her finger is injured due to the hinges of the door. She is made the culprit and a case of infanticide is filed against her. In the play within the play she is victimized and tortured in such a coverage that she tries to run away from the room but the door is bolted from the outside. Her condition is like an injured bird whose feathers are taken away compellingly. The remaining characters enjoy the victimization, helplessness and powerlessness of Leela Benare. The human instinct of violence makes the remaining characters happy to see how a poor helpless character like Leela Benare is trying to escape from the clutches in which she is put. At last she is sentenced to undertake the abortion which is the most violent act of the play. The play Gidhade is full of violence and the violence is at various levels. It is physical, sexual, verbal and psychological. The title of the play itself suggests that the characters in the play would behave like vultures and the same thing happens in the play. Except Rama and Rajaninath, the behavior of all the characters is very close to the vultures. Jagannath, the gardner is beaten by Ramakant as he demands his salary. Sakharam uncle is made to run away as he demands his share in the property. Ramakant and Umakant including Manik beat their father for money which he has kept in a secret account. Ramakant and Umakant beat their sister Manik and Manik puts ashes on the womb of Rama so that she should undergo an abortion are the incidents of violence in Gidhade. The very atmosphere of the play has been made gloomy purposely to add something to the violence of the play. In the play Ghashiram Kotwal, violence occurs as Ghashiram takes revenge against the treatment given to him by Nana and Brahmins of Poona. After obtaining Kotwalship, Ghashiram turns into a savage and victimizes the Brahmins of Poona. But his beloved daughter, Lalita Gauri dies during her abortion and at last Ghashiram is killed by the Brahmins of Poona. Ghashiram is the victim of power politics.

III. CONCLUSION

After the analysis and critical study of the selected playwrights and their selected plays the researcher comes to the conclusive statement that "Though the techniques used by Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar in their plays are different the basic themes of their plays are common." Tendulkar is a prolific writer who has written almost thirty plays and dealt with almost every form of literature whereas Girish Karnad wanted to be a poet but he has become a playwright accidentally. Only ten plays are at his credit but both the writers are the torch bearers of Indian theatre. Both of them have made Indian theatre rich by their contribution. Both the writers wrote experimental plays and both are amateurs. Vijay Tendulkar's Ghashiram Kotwal can be compared to Girish Karnad's Tughlaq. Ghashiram is a persecutor while Tughlaq is a rescuer. The former sends his daughter to buy power as a Kotwal of Poona to persecute the people whereas the latter gets his father and brother killed in a contrived accident to get power as the emperor of India to rescue his people through his reforms. Their plays are not based on the value of entertainment but they provoke the audience to think. They are contemporary writers and both of them share the contemporary social and national concerns of the country.

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