



Dalit aspects in the plays of Bohie Bhimmana and Girish Karnad: A Comparison

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Abstract— *Girish Karnad, a genius, one of the most prominent English play-wrights. Bohie Bhimanna hails from Andhra Pradesh. Karnad from Karnataka, while both writers exposed contemporary social and political issues in their plays. They highlighted the darker aspects of life so as to revolutionize and reform the men and manners of the people. Both writers tried to voice the hardships, emotions, and feelings of the poor, down trodden and subjugated people in their works.*

Keywords— *Hardships, downtrodden, revolution.*

Literature plays a leading role in moulding the society. That literature which portrays the society around and its problems is considered the best. Various arts that evade social issues are like flowers that are born to blush unseen and that waste their sweetness on the desert air.

Literature is a window to the world. It reflects not only the people, their life style, manners and mannerisms like associations with different personalities present, behavior in different situations and attitude of people regarding wealth, religion and norms existing in the society.

Bohie Bhimana was born on September 19, 1911 at Mamidi kuduru in East Godavari district in AP to Pullaiah and Nagamma. In the beginning of his career, he is a teacher, later he worked in Jana Vani, Jaya Bheri, Praja Mitra, Nava Jivan, Andhra prabha magazines.

Bohie Bhimana translated Ambedkar's Annihilation of the caste into telugu language. He propagated Ambedkar's philosophy. He highlighted social disparities, oppression of dalits as themes in his dramas. Bhimana's works Paleru, collie Raju, Ashuya, Pragati, Padipothuna Godalu, Raga Vasistam, Dharma vadhudu, Bala Yogi, Chitra kaladharshanam.

Paleru play story revolves around protagonist Venkanna. He works at an aristocrat, suffers a lot. Later he overcomes all his odds and studies very well. At the end of the play, he

gets a job, stops the injustice. Palleru play inspired many people. His Raga Vasistam is a special one, it propagated Indians are Aryans. In Raga Vasistam play Arundhati, Vasisthudu, prachinudu, sandhya characters are popular ones. Bhimanna dreamt egalitarian society.

In this paper I would like to bring out dichotomy of the upper caste and lower caste people which was existing in India. It became a major problem in rural India. In India various traditions, caste, religions are there. Our old rulers allowed the different races from alien nations. Indians feel unity in diversity, but in implementation way it has become a failure.

In his Author's Introduction to Three Plays (1994), Girish Karnad clearly stated:

To my generation a hundred crowded years of urban theatre seemed to have left almost nothing to hang on to, or take off from. And where was one to begin again? Perhaps by looking at our audience again, by trying to understand what experience the audience expected to receive from the theatre."¹

The meaning of "Dalit" in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (8th edition) runs thus: "in the traditional caste system a member of the caste that is considered the lowest and that has the fewest advantages: the dalits struggle for social and economic rights."¹ Dalit is a word used in 1930. It

means depressed classes, scheduled castes, scheduled Tribes, poor peasants, women and men have been exploited and ill-treated by the social and economic traditions of this country.”²

Dalit word is derived from Marathi language. It means broken or shattered. In Dalit chronicles the term is applied to marginalized people, Muslims, Christians. Dalit movement started in 1906 in Andhra Pradesh. Bhagya Reddy Varma became torch bearer of the movement to awaken the alienated communities.

The Dalit anxiety reflected in the works of Gurram Joshua, Bhoi Bheemanna, Kusuma Dharmanna, Katti Padma Rao. Bhoi Bheemanna's works like Palleru, Kooli Raju, Gudiselu Kallipothunnai etc portray dalit problems.

Drama is an aspect, which transforms the lives of the people. In modern Telugu, Kanada Drama's sky Padma Bhushan Bohie bhimanna, Gnanapita recipient Girish Karnad are like sun and moon. If we divide their plays according to genre, these are categorized as traditional plays, Historical, social ones. In Telugu language Bhimanna wrote Palleru, Cooli Raju, Pairu pata, Padipothuna Addugodalu, Manavuni Maro Majili, Sneha sundari, etc. In Kanada literature Girish Karnad wrote Yayati, Tuglaq, Hayavadana, Taledanda, Bali, Naga mandla, Bimba, Agni varsh etc.

In the plays of duo they portrayed social elements freely. In these two playwrights plays dalit aspect is visible in a crystal clear manner. In every line of their plays dalit perspectiveness is depicted. In Palleru play Bohie bhimanna picturized about the atrocities of upper castes preventing the school education, and allowing the low caste people to do the drudgery in their fields in a well manner.

In Taledanda play Karnad created Vijalla who belonged to lower clan. In 12th century there was a great caste bifurcation. By portraying this character Karnad brought equality among the human community. In all these duo's plays Dalit aspect is visible in direct and indirectly. Bhimanna "Raga Vasistam" is a socio fantasy play. Despite of the socio fantasy elements, this play highlights the oppression of Dalits, portrayed among the lovers, but in the end of the play, he concluded that God should come to the earth to eradicate caste disparity. Bohie Bhimanna wanted to convey the message in the character of Lord Shiva, he brings some reformation in upper castes, Dalits development is emphasized at the conclusion of the play.

In Agni Varsh play Karnad used socio-fantasy technique. Based on this technique, he selected purana theme in a satirized manner through Paravasu, Aravasu Brahman characters brought forth the oppression of upper castes. Through Nithili Girijan maid he proposed Dalit aspect in this play. Nithili was loved by upper castes. But at the end of the play a line conveys the atrocities which are

incurred on the lower caste people. Nithili's lover Aravasu pronounces that "we should not believe upper caste people." In this way Karnad portrayed the concealed dalit perspectiveness in this play. From good old days onwards India became hub of caste system. Hindu traditions developed this system. Hindu epics, literature, arts propounded this theory and imparted into the minds of Indians. It spread like a wild fire. Due to this malady untouchability was formed, untouchable community led their lives in the vicinity of darkness. Bhimanna's plays reemphasized the malady and brought some change in the society. His contribution to the Telugu drama, is an immense one and wanted to spread sarvodaya socialism. Karnad highlighted the same aspect in his plays.

Tale -Danda depicts the violent history of an anti caste movement in the 12th century Karnataka as a parallel of the Mandir and Mandal agitation of the late 1980s. It is based on the caste system in India. It reveals the majority religion turning against itself. He highlights the conflicts not only across caste boundaries within Hinduism but also between Hinduism and reformist religions like Buddhism and Jainism.

In Tale Danda, Karnad deals with one of the most sensitive issues of all times- the ugly face of caste system of India that was in the past hailed an ideal one. Though the play is based on an historical event, Karnad's adept use of symbolism, irony and humour makes it a modern play. It is because of these modern devices that situations and the minor characters in the play dramatize the contemporary socio-political scenario in India.⁴

In the play, Tale-Danda is a clash between the traditional orthodox minded people and the people of progressive views like Basavanna who want to establish a society based secular philosophy. Bijalla is all the time aware of his origin as he himself comes from barber community. Through Bijalla, Karnad comments on caste system in India. Basavanna believes in the philosophy of non-violence and he dislikes the treatment given by his followers to the Jains.

Karnad contrasts the life of discipline and sacrifice with the life of instinct and emotion through the character of Nittilai. The play associates Brahmanism and ruthless and shudra culture with love, compassion, freshness, and hope although the contrast is not simplistic or absolute. The character of Nittilai is introduced to show how caste boundaries oppress people. It dramatically presents the conflict between good and evil. The images of love finding its own world and casting aside the world torn apart by jealousy, communal hatred and caste system are contemporary voices in the play.

In Taledanda play Karnad used Bijalla character to propound the theory of Dalit

perspectiveness.

“Jathi Anede Manishi pi charmamulantidi. Danni valachi paresina kotha charmani chusi kuda andaru patha jathine gurthu thechukuntaru. Vedu Mala, Vedu Khsatriya, Vedu Golla vadu.” In this way Bhimanna, Karnad’s plays propelled the theory of dalit perspectiveness.

Karnad’s Taledanda only depicts the dalits problems, but Bhimanna picturised dalit problems in all his plays. By using the characters Jaggadeva Malli Bomma, Basavana Bijalla, Harallaiah, Madhu varasa, Karnad propagated the dalit theory in Taledanda play. All these characters have amicability in this play. In Paleru play Bhimanna Venkanna, Upakari, Ramam, Ramadevi, Umadevi, Param Jyothi, Madhu characters revealed not only dalit aspect, there should not be any disparity between any religion, caste. Both rendered their service to create egalitarian society. Both the writers depicted the Indian caste system and life of untouchables in their works in order that they might awaken readers to their own social evils and the atrocities and help to bring about a social revolution.

“Karnad himself tells that he had the “Mandal” and “Mandir movements and the unrest they generated at the back of his mind when he wrote the play, Tale Danda is a fast moving play with exciting action; it is a pity it could not be something more.”⁵

Humanism is at the centre of Karnad’s fictional art. His humanistic vision is variously drawn from the east and west. Compassion is the compelling motive in his humanist vision. It is essentially the love of humanity for its own sake and in all its unfailing faith in its nobility. Man is essentially perfect. His imperfect nature, if any, is due to environment, and other factors. Human creativity is always and unquestioningly towards realizing positive and fruitful levels of existence. Humanism is better than religion. If the human mind-set changes, a better society and a better tomorrow can be expected and established.

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