

Kaalakutam – A Pragmatic Portraiture Of Political Power

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Kaalakutam means strong poison which kills the people immediately. Playwright Dr. Vizai Bhaskar has aptly chosen the title for his social and political drama which is an eye-opener for common people in choosing their political leader. The title and the drama are thought-provoking, realistic, and immaculate both in presentation and theme. The playwright has touched many points about the society, politics and outlook of the people in the modern society. This paper tells about the present political scenario and attitudes of political leaders. It also illustrates the language skills and great narration of the playwright.

Key words: *Political scenario, election strategies, exploitation, bribery, vision, hallucination*

Kaalakutam is a political drama which reveals the real character of politicians and their crooked plans. In olden days, politics means doing service to the society and helping the people who are in penury. People who are philanthropic, kind-hearted, educated, visionaries and service-oriented join politics and they are craving for doing good to the society. Sacrificing their property and lives to their mother land is their main motto. It is vice versa in present Indian society. People who want to acquire and accumulate money, who are miscreants and murderers,

rapists and rowdies, money- launders and fraudulent are great political leaders in modern India.

The playwright has expressed his anguish and agony in a thoughtful and sincere way.

The drama opens with Raghava, son of a great generous and affluent person Raja Ram Das, catches a rat which is troubling him for a long time. He kills that rat with one shot and proudly shows it to the clerk Venkata Rao. Here I feel that the dramatist has symbolically shown the death of a rat. Rat is a sign of resourcefulness and in Asian cultures rat is treated as an auspicious symbol of good fortune. Rats are richly malleable and inexorable when demanding a solution to a problem. These creatures move into the corners and cracks of reality scavenging whatever they need from what the rest of the world leaves behind as useless.

Showing the dead rat indicates the inauspicious omens of Raghava's traits. He wants to contest in local Municipal Elections as a Chairman with the support of his friends Dawood, Doctor Venkateswara Rao and lawyer Sharma. Raghava is a mark of bad character and fraudulence where as his father Raja Ram Das is an epitome of altruistic attitude and amicability. Both the father and the son are completely opposite in their nature and thoughts. Raja Ram Das, though a well- heeled modest person, always thinks down-to-earth. He serves the people and provides many essential things when they are in need. He conducts many charity programs and collects donations

along with his alms for the construction of houses for the poor. He treats his employees as his children and shows a lot of concern to them. On contrary, Raghava ill-treats everyone. With his arrogance and short-temper, he slaps and beats the employees. Mentioning two childhood incidents of Raghava, the dramatist portrays Raghava's character as a replica of spoiled brats. He ran away from home in his childhood and came back after the death of his mother. He never gives respect either to elders or to youngsters. He has no proper education, manners, mental balance, patience and vision, but wants to participate in elections. He wants power to show his authority on people and get money.

The dramatist openly tells that such type of people become the rulers of our independent India. A glorious county which was ruled by commendable rulers, which was called a depository of treasure and wisdom, which had got independence by the sacrifices of noble leaders and humane personalities, is now in the hands of malefactors, rascalions, illiterate hooligans and criminals. Readers at once agree with writer's opinion.

The people who want to help others may also suffer because of these swindlers. When Maria, employee of Raja Ram Das tries to reduce the rifts between father and son, Raghava exploits her and molests her modesty. Raghava mixes some drug, makes her cataleptic and rapes her. By giving her helping hand to unite father and son, she gets molestation as a reward. This proves that our helping nature becomes our enemy if we help worthless people. When Maria comes to

resign her job, Raja Ram Das convinces her to stay for some time, shreds off her letter. Dr. Vizai Bhaskar clearly depicts the difference between father and son.

The characters Vizai Bhaskar introduces to the readers are very near to reality. The story is neatly woven with suitable characters. Every person and every role has its own importance in theme. Chairman Kodandaramaiah, also known as KR, a crooked politician is a facsimile of present politicians. He is like a venomous serpent, takes revenge on the persons who trouble him. Raghava competes against him, not knowing about his wretched plans. Both Raghava and Kodandaramaiah have same thinking, the difference is Raghava is short-tempered but Kodandaramaiah is a cunning jackal. He never exposes his cruel nature to others. Though he knows about the nomination of Raghava against him, he comes to Raja Ram Das to get his blessings.

Kodandaramaiah persuades the voters in wrong direction. He advises Raghava to withdraw from the election and gives him bribe. He inflames riots and religious discriminations among people. With the help of some hit-men, he murders clerk Venkatrao's brother for previous rifts. When Raghava's team wants to get benefit from this case, Kodandaramaiah consoles Venkatrao's sister-in-law and promises to take care of her family and children. He offers Venkatrao a job in his office. As the hit-man is a Muslim, Kodandaramaiah provides bail to him and gets the votes from Muslims. When Raghava team plans to divide Muslim votes by keeping Dawood in election, Kodandaramaiah stops funds for the construction of Masjid and roads to Muslim streets.

This action makes Muslims get angry on Dawood and they insist him to withdraw from the election. He threatens Dawood's father as well.

Vizai Bhaskar expounds the views and plans of political leaders through Kodandaramaiah's ghost. After Raghava has murdered KR, The ghost of KR says to Raghava, "In democracy, you should make your opponent politically dead, not physically. You should disable him, not kill him" (141). The playwright discloses his desolation by comparing our country's condition with other developed countries. The ghost says, "There is no Raja Harischandra in America, but there are great persons who do not lie in their life time! No Bhageeratha there, but there are perennial water sources and waterfalls. No Ashta Lakshmis' there, but there are bullion, paddy, luxury and fortunes!" (142). Dr. Vizai Bhaskar further describes the greatness of our forefathers who have given us fabulous culture and fantabulous spirit. He feels sorry for the young people who never understand these values and norms created by our predecessors. The ghost speaks, "Our fore runners had established certain values, created myths around them and laid down norms, laws and standards for the common lot, tamed them and reigned irrevocably. Now, the times are changed. It's the age of diverting funds to cheap schemes to woe the voters". (142)

Vizai Bhaskar has not only criticized the politicians but voters also. Present day voters are not noticing the good qualities of the competitors. They are thinking about their personal benefits, reservations, subsidy schemes, free things, pensions, free money and

gifts without doing hard work. No one is ready to do productive work which makes our country a developed country. People, especially the youth are addicted to bad habits, using vulgar and abusive language, never think about the welfare of the society. People like KR, Raghava, Lawyer Sharma are more in number than people like Raja Ram Das. Kodanda Ramaiah's son is also a vagabond, scalawag and a good-for-nothing fellow like Raghava. He has eloped with lawyer Sharma's daughter and spent some days with her. When she asks him to marry her in front of his father, he says to his father, "Dad! When she eloped with me before the marriage, won't she elope with somebody else after marriage?" (119). Such a nasty person KR's son is. There is no wonder if KR's son behaves in that spiteful manner as we know about the adage "as the father, so the son". But it is pity that persons like Raja Ram Das who get disgraceful sons like Raghava. Raja Ram Das expresses his sorrow to Maria, "Children suck the mother when they are young and the father when they are old. Ailment is to him but treatment is to me! I taught him to swim, and now he drowns me!" (99). To get his mother's gold ornaments and minority votes, Raghava marries Maria, a Christian girl. Raja Ram Das feels happy about his son's marriage with Maria and hopes that she could change his son. Though Maria has tried her level best, her attempts are futile and fiasco.

Dawood wants to withdraw from the election as he is unable to face the torture of KR. He comes to Raghava's house to tell his problem. Raghava has given a meeting where he is pebbled by KR's people. With some bruises on his face, Raghava and the doctor enter the

house. Raghava gets angry after seeing Dawood as they have advised him not to meet Raghava. Doctor arranges a press meeting with a journalist and bribes that reporter for writing against KR. Indirectly Vizai Bhaskar discloses the attitude of present media people who can change the information completely according to their convenience. When Dawood get convulsions, Raghava neither gives medicine nor allows Maria to help him. Dawood dies in front of Maria which turns her get scared about Raghava. Dawood's death internally harms Raghava leads him to get hallucinations.

KR's ghost tells Raghava that by killing him he has done a great benefit to him. When Raghava asks KR's ghost how he has helped him, KR's ghost says, "My son is a good for nothing fellow. I was deeply worried about his future. Anyway, by killing me this way, you have transferred my political life to my son. He will be the next Chairman after me. The public sympathize the dead rather than the living, that too, towards the one who die miserably. So my son will gain the sympathy votes and he will be the Chairman beyond doubt" (141). In this present society, we can observe that in order to get power, people are killing their close relatives even their parents. Vizai Bhaskar sarcastically exposes the reality about politics which is usually understood as poly-tricks. After reading the drama, the readers sometimes may lose their optimism about good society and benevolent people but the playwright strives to give hope by creating characters like Raja Ram Das. Raja Ram Das, after observing his son's madness at the end of the story comments, "Those who desire power without

deserving are bound to get mad one day or the other like this! Power and positions are like guns and knives. They should remain only in the hands of those who deserve them and those who feel responsibility” (147).

Vizai Bhaskar not only maintains the story as a gripping one but makes the story as a knowledgeable reading by using idiomatic expressions, phrases and proverbs. Some of the proverbial gems in the story are: A cracked bell can never sound well!, To kill a dog, it should be branded as mad, Be it a father or a foe, why should we spare a betrayer?, Revenge yields momentary solace and endurance gives eternal solace, your enemy is none other than your tongue, Every wind is ill to a broken ship, There is no point in purchasing a tooth brush after you lost your teeth, Faults are thick where love is thin, Work is worship not a warship, An open door may tempt even a Saint and A fault confessed is half redressed. The dramatist has used all above proverbs in a systematic and sensible way.

Usage of idiomatic expressions adds a special flavor to the story. Readers can enjoy and savor the language skills of the dramatist. Expressions like “a mere cry in the wilderness, leaving in the lurch, kicks the bucket, gross injustice, golden opportunity, takes a ticket to hell, power and palanquins, on loggerheads, mighty mountain, fly in hot soup, between the devil and deep sea, by hook or by crook, poke your nose in everything, to bell the cat, a pin for weathercock, sell the fruits in the name of the tree, sling mud on others, dance to the tunes etc.

Dr. Vizai Bhaskar has appropriately used proverbs and

idiomatic terms but for phrasal verbs he has depended on slang. The informal words ‘trouser gets loose, pants get loose, my trouser lost its tightness’ are used many times in the story which make the readers get fed up. Phrases like ‘shed an ocean of tears, guard your tongue, day in and day out, indisciplined dog, real hue is exposed, old goose became tongue tied, hard nut to crack’ etc. have added flavor to the conversations. Vizai Bhaskar is interested to use rhyming words also. His narration seems like poetic description in many occasions. Rhyming words like ‘power and palanquin’, ‘topsy-turvy’, ‘leaving in the lurch’, ‘Tom, Dicky and Harry’, ‘religious riots’, ‘mighty mountain’, ‘thieves and knaves’, ‘cowards and crooks’, ‘rogues and ruffians’, ‘victory weds’, ‘raves and rants’ etc. give pleasure to the readers.

Conclusion:

Dr. Vizai Bhaskar has proved himself a successful playwright for his deep observation of the modern society and his analytical narration. Though the ending is a little bit over-optimistic, it gives a hope to everyone that bad will be suffered at the end. The introduction of Satan in Raghava’s mind represents insanity and inhumanity in us. If we suppress that negative Satan in our mind, we become humans or we are equal to demons. Because of the illness of some people, other innocent people may suffer many times. Through Maria and Venkat Rao sister-in-law’s characters, the dramatist explains the despotic condition of women in the society. Dr. Vizai Bhaskar has succeeded in every attempt to give message to the society.

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