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Political Sensibility In Habib Tanvir

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Abstract: Sensibility plays an important role in literature. Basically, sensibility is the key to literary creation and reception. Literature originates from the heart and reaches the heart. A writer is rich in sensitive personality; his deeper observation and response to the socio-historical condition of his time are often reflected metaphorically in his works. He looks at an event or situation from a different perspective than the common man, examines it, understands its depth, and contemplates it in the context of its long-term consequences. Literary sensibility ignites the light in the darkness and a ray of hope in despair. Habib Tanvir portrays the contradictions of society, politics, religion, history, and culture. His plays are a sensitive response to the socio-political system of his time. As a close observer of Indian politics and politicians, he has brought out these experiences in his plays. His theatre is politically drenched to expose political hypocrisy, conspiracies, corruption, and malpractices to destroy truth in order to gain power. His plays like *Hirma Ki Amar Kahani* are good examples of various aspects of corrupt politics. Nepotism and the selfishness of the politicians and their lust for power is giving rise to social hatred, caste discrimination and religious riots. Police and bureaucrats have become puppets in the hands of politicians. In this way, Habib Tanvir has tried to bring the naked reality of politics in front of the society.

The present paper shall discuss how political sensibility can shape literary sensibility of an author, especially in the context of the plays of Habib Tanvir.

Index Terms: Political sensibility, socio-historical, metaphorically, culture, despair, socio-political, hypocrisy, conspiracies, malpractices, nepotism, and bureaucrats.

Introduction:

India became independent in 1947, the social, political, economic and cultural conditions changed. The people of India found themselves independent and started searching for their new directions. Circumstances did not change immediately after independence, it took some time to change an entire tradition, but in that time a clear impression of change was visible on the society. Naturally, when society was changing, art and literature could not remain untouched by it, and many changes took place in the field of drama and theatre. With the advent of films in 1913, the Parsi theater gradually began to die out. The influence of western theater on Indian theater did not end completely, but Indian theater started in search of its own. Many dramatists came forward in search of new subject, craft, language and style and tried to give a new dimension to Indian theater with their creativity. Dramatists like Habib Tanvir, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, B.V Karanth, Vijay Tendulkar, Jagdish Chandra Mathur, Mohan Rakesh, Pt. Lakshminarayan Lal, etc., used new traditions through their medium, in which on the one hand, there is an exploration of Indian and western drama traditions, while on the other hand, there is an original vision and deep understanding of the era. All these dramatists, with the help of this original vision and understanding of the era, found their experimental directions on different planes. These dramas do not follow the tradition on the ground of experiment, but try to give something new through its exploration or direct interview with the contemporary reality through each work.

The contemporary dramatists have dealt with a severe blow to the Indian tradition, ideals, social, moral values and human sensibilities. Today, man has become insensitive due to his materialistic thinking and inhumanity. The main reason for this has been the change in the traditional status and environment, and as a result, the values instead of progressing towards the pinnacle of highness, have downtrodden and declined. It has become the duty of the litterateur to give concrete form to the anomalies and the hesitations of the middle-class life, they started presenting contemporary political and social questions in their plays. In many plays of this period, playwrights started raising the contemporary problems and awareness about the problems of the era by taking up the historical and mythological stories. Dramas of this era were written in the background of capitalist economy, class-difference, generational conflict, and disintegration of moral values, etc. The dramatists of this era did not blindly follow the previous concepts, but gave momentum to the drama through a new struggle. Playwrights portrayed these situations in their plays somewhere through conflict, somewhere

through struggle of values, and somewhere through freedom of man-woman relationship. Indian social conditions have been multi-dimensional and multi-layered. IPTA, the Indian theatre association had already been doing the same for a long-long time.

The IPTA (Indian Peoples Theatre Association) was born out of the country's freedom struggle, and was established on 25 May, 1943 in Bombay. It was named by the renowned scientist Homi Jahangir Bhabha. Its motto was - *People's theater stars the people*. IPTA gave theater the form of a committed consciousness, and was like a mirror of its time and society, which actively inspired to bring change in the society. Parallel to the company theater of the stardom of artists, it was the theater of the common and ordinary people. They supported the lower strata of the society, the oppressed, the exploited Dalit masses, the peasants and the labourers. It considered the artist as a social worker and art as a social work. During the year 1943-47, the activities of IPTA started becoming very popular and nationwide. This group emphasized on staging progressive plays, it also popularized the staging of street plays by assimilating the elements of folk-stage. All the progressive and leftist writers, literary intellectuals of Hindi, Urdu and other Indian languages were either directly associated with it or indirectly its admirers. Hundreds of progressive plays were staged by IPTA, even after independence till 1960. Great personalities like Ali Sardar Jafri, Habib Tanvir, Kaifi Azmi, Rajendra Raghuvanshi, Ram Vilas Sharma, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and Upendra Nath Ashk were associated with IPTA. Habib Tanvir has also fulfilled this social responsibility very well through his theatre art, he has thrown light on the various sensibilities of human life his entire career, through his plays. He has presented the vivid and vibrant sensibilities of the era in front of the society.

Habib (Ahmed Khan) Tanvir was a multifaceted playwright of the modern Indian theatre. He had a stubborn personality with a character of not giving up, due to which his works have also remained wide and comprehensive. Tanvir has done a wonderful job of establishing Indianness in Indian theaters by developing his own independent theatrical style. He is not only a playwright, but different aspects like theater founder, director, actor, poet, song composer, reviewer, editor, etc., have made his personality and creativity multidimensional. His contribution to Indian theatres has been highly commendable and is reflected in his works. He has been awarded by many prestigious awards like *Sahitya Akademy Award* (1969), *Padma Shree* (1982), *Kalidasa Award* (1990), etc.

Habib Tanvir was born on September 1, 1923 in Baijnathpara district of Raipur, capital of Chhattisgarh. His mother, Nazirunnisa Begum and father Hafiz Mohammad Hayat Khan affectionately called him *Baba*. Later, Habib Ahmed Khan started doing poetry with the pen name *Tanvir*. The art and musical environment of his mother's family slowly started attracting Habib since his childhood. He started watching dramas and movies secretly, started acting in schools from the age of eleven. In *Polishwala*, he played the role of a protagonist, and the role of Prince Arthur in Shakespeare's play *King John*. He did his matriculation from Lari Municipal High School, Raipur. Later, Bachelors from Morris College, Nagpur, and the Master's degree (Urdu) from Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. But due to his passion for films and theatre, he left studies between and reached the film city of Mumbai to continue his acting career. Tanvir has taken acting training from London's *Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA)* in 1955. Meanwhile, he also received training in play direction, drama writing and play presentation from *Old Vic Theater School*, Bristol. Habib Tanvir arrived Mumbai in 1946, the Indian social, political and cultural environment was overshadowed at that time. Due to patriotism and interest in theatre, Habib Tanvir gradually got pulled towards IPTA.

In 1958, after returning from London, he went to his grandmother's house in Raipur, where he witnessed a local group performing *Nacha* and dancing. He kept watching it throughout the night and was deeply moved by it. *Nacha* is a famous folk drama of Chhattisgarh. The word *nacha* means *play* or *imitation*. This style of Chhattisgarh also includes dance, song and story. The plot unfolds through drama in which the contemporary situations and problems are portrayed in a humorous and sarcastic manner. The resonance of music and the precocious ability of acting impressed him deeply. The very next day, Tanvir came to Delhi with six dance artists and a few days later established *Naya Theatre*, along with these artists in which, there is a wonderful coordination of folklore, folk music, folk songs, folk drama and folk artists. This style has made Habib Tanvir a different identity at the world level. He has brought Chhattisgarhi actors and their dance at a world stage. He has written and presented plays like *Agra Bazar* (1979), *Hirma ki Amar Kahaani* (1990), *Dekh Rahe Hain Nain* (1996), *Charandas Chor* (2004), *Bahadur Kalarin* (2004), *Gaon ke Naav Sasuraar*, *Mor Naav Damaad* (2004), *Mitti Ki Gaadi* (1999), etc.

Drama is a collective art, in which sensations are made interesting and effective by various arts. Drama being a visual medium, human sensibilities have been effectively expressed in it. His plays originated from rural culture portraying the life of modern Indian people. Various sensibilities are visible in the plays of the playwright Habib Tanvir. Regarding the sensibilities expressed in Tanvir's play, Mahavir Aggarwal says, -

In his plays, he openly shows the contradictions of society, politics, religion, history and culture. Dramas full of social concern give life to his plays. It does not become loud like sloganeering, but affects like a current inside. His plays give a vocal expression to the classes and life struggle of the people by engaging the consciousness of the audience. (pp.28)

Expressing politics in literature does not only mean propagating in favour or opposition to the political work of a political party or politician, but politics in literature is expressed in a sensitive way by becoming a strong thought flow. Prior to this, we need to know what politics is actually? The meaning of politics is the policy rules of the state, basically it is the art of doing the right things at the right time and right place. But politics is a very broad concept and has no literal meaning, it finds place in literature in the form of ideology and ideology gets artistic tone by mixing with sensibility. The meaning of ideology is not to make propaganda or to make manifesto, but the writer gives it a new form and dimension, filling new meaning in it. Politics is about the all-round development of the individual, family, society and nation. It is a constantly changing continuous, timeless and public activity. After independence, democratic governance system was accepted in India, due to which a new consciousness of joy and enthusiasm was awakened in the Indian public. Every person started cherishing the dreams of good days and progress, but the increasing greediness and selfishness of the politicians shattered their dreams in a short period of time. Disillusionment and mistrust towards politics arose in the minds of common people. The contemporary litterateurs have given a vocal voice to this critical situation of politics through literature. Therefore, I have discussed the political sensibilities expressed in the plays of Habib Tanvir through this paper.

Political Sensibility in Habib Tanvir's Plays

The current politics is standing on the strength of lies and deceit. The person who has the art of changing colour like a chameleon or a jackal, he only can be successful in today's politics, it is the biggest irony of present-day politics. Some people are also good which cannot be denied but their number is very less, and in the name of social reform, they are trying their best. This dirty environment of politics has destroyed values like social reforms, social progress, non-violence, truth, humanity, secularism, etc. This is the reason why honest politicians are not able to succeed in this politics. Politicians have become the biggest enemy of truth. Politicians are misusing their rights and powers for their selfishness. The only aim of politics of today's politicians is to get power and maintain it. Habib Tanvir has depicted this terrible and violent form of politics in his plays.

In the play *Dekh Rahe Hain Nain*, Virat starts feeling guilty after killing his elder brother and starts suffering in the fire of sorrow and pain. Maharaj Vijay Dev reminds him of the teachings of the *Geeta* and says that, no one belongs to anyone in war. If you don't kill him, he will kill you. This is the law of war. On this Virat says,

Your Highness, I have come to know that the sword is a sign of power and power is the enemy of truth."

(pg.59-60)

It is obvious that violence and corruptions are the basics of power. Whether it is monarchy or today's democracy, lies and violence have dominated in it.

In the play *Charandas Chor*, for the sake of royalty, the queen kills Charandas, who speaks honest and unflinching truth. Charandas vows to speak the truth and maintains it in every situation, but unfortunately speaking this truth takes his life. The queen wanted to marry Charandas but he refused her. The queen asked him not to tell anyone about her marriage proposal. Charandas says, he has taken an oath to tell the truth, if anyone asks, he will tell the truth. Now the queen feels that if this was true, and if he speaks in front of anyone, she will be defamed. She admits that, in order to save her power and prestige, Charandas's mouth will have to be silenced under any circumstances. That's why the queen lies that,

ये चोर ला कोन छोडिस कइसे आगे मोर खोली भीतर येखर ये हिम्मत! तुमन सब कहां चल दे रहेवं। चरनदास मोर से आके

कहत रीहिस की मैं तोर से शादी कर हूँ।

चोर: रानी दाई!

रानी: येकर ये हिम्मत अइसे आदमी ला तोर मार काट के फेंक दो। (pg.50)

In this way, to save power, the queen kills Charandas who tells the truth by lying. In this context, Amitesh Kumar says, Charandas Chor drama exposes the character of truth and power through two parallel characters. A thief gives his life to protect the truth and autocratic power takes the thief's life to hide its truth. The play is linked to the despotic and authoritarian attitude of power. In the play *Ek Aurat Hypetia Bhi Thi* also, a great scholar and social reformer like Hypetia is killed for power. This picture is also visible in the current politics. Today's politics is also running on the support of violence and lies. They have started crossing all limits for power. This is the hour of danger for democracy.

In the play, *Ek Aurat Hypetia Bhi Thi*, the conflict that arose at the time of creation of the universe is presented. Sate kills his brother Oristis for the sake of power. He wants to sit on the throne, but Horus, the son of Oristis, holds the right to sit on the throne by family traditions. So, a struggle for power between Sate and Horus, the uncle and nephew kick off. Sate tries to kill Horus. It is clear from this that there were family struggles for power even among the Gods. Due to the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992, there were religious riots in many cities. An atmosphere of terror and fear was created all around. Seeing this appalling situation, a question arose in the mind of every sensitive person that what is it for? Its purpose is religious or political selfishness. The playwright has tried to portray this pain in the public court by making it a sensation in *Ek Aurat Hypetia Bhi Thi*:

Raavi 2: "Friends, our argument started from Babri Masjid, Babri Masjid"

Why was it broken? What was the reason?

Raavi 1: Religion.

Raavi 2: No, Politics.

Ravi 1: Religion.

Raavi 2: We said that let's keep both religion and politics separate from the demolition of the mosque.

(pg.31)

A woman with progressive thoughts like Hypetia was killed by being called an atheist. Along with personal freedom, there was also a threat to freedom of expression. Religious fanaticism destroyed humanity. Based on this historical precedent, Habib Tanvir has presented the consequences of the Babri Masjid demolition. After the demolition of Babri Masjid, a similar situation had arisen all over India. Even today this issue is raised by the politicians at the time of elections. When elections are announced, they gather votes by creating conflict between Ram & Rahim. Elections are being fought on the basis of this emotional issue. On the basis of religion, political parties have started achieving their selfishness by making the general public emotional. They have made religion their weapon. We have to understand this conspiracy of theirs.

In the play, *Agra Bazar*, there is a fight between Madaari and Kakdiwala, then instead of investigating, the city inspector imposes a fine of one rupee each on all the shopkeepers without thinking.

Inspector: "Yes...yes I know all that. You all have to pay the fine for your mischief. Will happen. Come to the police station and deposit the money." (pg.9)

If someone else commits the crime and someone else gets the punishment, what kind of justice is this? They are openly collecting bribe under the guise of uniform. It is because of this corrupt practice that the common man is now more afraid of the police than of the thieves. Bribery and corrupt behavior of the police has been depicted in the play, *Charandas Chor*. The sergeant helps Charandas by taking money to loot the state treasury. The constable shakes hands with the thief and leaves happily.

Thief: "Don't worry Guruji, he (constable) is my best friend." (pg.63)

Police have now become friends of thieves and not of common man. They have an equal share in black business, gambling, liquor, theft, dacoity in the country. If the keeper himself turns out to be a robber, then on whom should he trust. The thing to think about is that leave the common man, now even the thieves have no faith in the police.

Thief: "Don't trust the policeman! (pg.45)

The army of the country protects the country and the police of the country protects the people of the country. The function of the police system is to establish peace and order inside the country. The responsibility of eradicating evil from the society and establishing good is on the police system, but this police system, which was created for the security and order of the country, has become evil and corrupt today. Crimes like murder, dacoity, robbery, rape are increasing day by day in the country. Thieves, dacoits and criminals have collaborated with the police. Due to the corrupt conduct of policemen, the common man as well as the thieves have lost faith in them. This is the disturbing truth of the police system. Along with these plays, plays like: *Hirma Ki Amar Kahani* and *Dekh Rahe Hain Nain* have discussed the conspiracies and atrocities of the police department. In this way, Tanvir has exposed the corruption and bribery of the police department. Similarly, Habib Tanvir has depicted various misdeeds of corrupt and bribe-taking policemen in his plays.

Power and fame have been the center of attraction of human life, every person wants power and fame in life and only politics can accomplish this desire in today's situation. That's why the desire to become a politician is increasing in the minds of most of the people. Political struggle starts at home, Politicians think that their legacy & identity in politics should remain intact even after them. That is why they want to make their son or daughter their political heir, but the brother or nephew of the family feels that now the brother or uncle should give them a chance. Due to this, a conflict in the family starts for the sake of power and money. This struggle has started appearing in big political families. This struggle of power is not only in democracy, but this struggle is going on from the very beginning of our ancient times. The theme of nepotism-conflict is also visible in Habib Tanvir's plays. In the play *Hirma Ki Amar Kahani*, there is a struggle between brothers for the kingship. Maharaja Himadev's drunken brother Bira sits on the throne along with the administrative officers. The collector says,

It is ordered that Maharaja Hirmadeo Singh Gangavanshi be removed from the throne of Titurbasana and his younger brother, Biradeo Singh Gangavanshi will be crowned as the king of Tirabasana. (pg.25-26)

The ambition of power has made people self-centred. There is a competition going on in the house to get the throne. If brother is in one party, then nephew in the other party, ideology has no importance, only fame and power is needed. Leaders are being born in the homes of leaders. Unfortunately, political heirs are being formed in a democracy like a monarchy. People use to call them youth leaders. In this way, playwright Habib Tanvir has presented the nepotism conflicts arising in today's politics through historical plays.

In the play *Hirma Ki Amar Kahani*, we can see these false promises of the political party and the state of disillusionment of the general public. At the time of elections, the ruling party made many promises to Hirmadev and the people there, and merged them in their party, but even after ten months of getting power, not a single promise is fulfilled. As soon as they get power, they forget their promises. The public gets betrayed. Due to this increasing tendency of lies in the politicians, the general public has started losing faith in democracy. Various schemes are being prepared by the government for the development of farmers and tribals which proves to be unsuccessful in taking stock of the real situation and environment of the farmers and tribals living in villages, forests, etc. The plans prepared for them, in reality remains untouched, they remain neglected from these facilities and the most important reason is that some plans come true only on paper. In this context, Habib Tanvir has raised his voice in the play *Hirma Ki Amar Kahani*. King Hirmadev says to Kalhan that,

Be it you or the high command, I just know that all your schemes have failed and your politics is unsuccessful, otherwise the budget of two crores fixed for the development of Titurbasana, if Had even a part of it been used properly, the silver road could have been built from Rainpur to Raipur. (pg.41)

Now, it is necessary that such a law should be made that any political party or politician who makes promises at the time of election gets power. If they are not fulfilled after coming to power, then that party or politician should not get the right to stand in the next election. It is possible that this will curb the lies and deceit of politicians.

In the play *Hirma Ki Amar Kahani*, King Hirmadev is made a victim of a political conspiracy. The rickshaw puller is deliberately asked to file a case against Hirmadev by paying/bribing him. He is arrested and his younger brother Biradev is declared king in his place. Not only this, but in the end the death of Hirmadev is also proved to be an accident. Finally, a judicial inquiry commission was set up and the commission also came to the same conclusion that Maharaj Hirmadev died due to an accident in 1977, thus establishing a political system for democracy. Hirmadev's feudal system is destroyed through conspiracy, when some tribal legislators raise their voice against it, it is ignored as a political conspiracy.

Conspiracy has now become the most effective weapon in the game of politics which is being used to win the chess of politics. This weapon is being used to gain power or to demote someone. The political life of many politicians has come to an end by getting trapped in this conspiratorial cycle of politics. Plenty of politicians have become victims of political conspiracy, sometimes, this weapon is also deliberately used by politicians to save themselves. This proves that political conspiracy is a double-edged sword which is used to protect oneself and to attack the opponents. Habib Tanvir has also presented the sensitivity of this political conspiracy through his plays. Charandas also becomes a victim of political conspiracy in the play *Charandas Chor*. The queen kills Charandas to save her power and prestige in front of her province and public.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that playwright Habib Tanvir has realistically depicted political sensibilities in his theatrical literature. The political sensibilities expressed in his plays are rich and powerful in subtly highlighting the changing social and political life. Under political sensibility, the playwright has thrown light on various aspects of current politics. Truth is being destroyed by political conspiracies to gain power. The greed and hatred of politicians is fuelling casteism and religious riots. Family (nepotism) conflicts have become a headache for politicians. Police and bureaucrats have become puppets in the hands of politicians. The police system, which is responsible for establishing peace and order in the society, is also losing its stomach after taking bribe. In this way, Habib Tanvir has tried to bring the naked reality of politics in front of the society. Overall, we can say that Habib Tanvir has been completely successful in expressing political sensibilities in his plays.

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