

Damn You Fate: A Sharp Parody of The Indian Government Machinery

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The purpose of this research paper is to study the mockery of the current political set up of the country as depicted in the play *Damn You Fate* (Hatt Teri Kismat). Vijay Tendulkar's plays diagnose the contemporary socio-political reality with unflinching integrity. *Damn You Fate* is a ruthless defiance against the dirty power games. In this play the characters are type characters representing a certain class. That's why they have not been named. They have been given algebraical identification, simply 'A' & 'B' and a crowd of unspecified people. 'A' & 'B' represent two classes, the submissive lower class and the calculating shrewd politicians. This story has two characters; a corrupted chief minister and a common man. The two meet incidentally and start discussing their personalities. The climax of the story occurs when the corrupted chief minister finds an angry mob approaching him in order to kill him. Fearing for his life the frightened chief minister decides to swap clothes with the common man to save himself from the mob. Unfortunately, whilst swapping clothes their faces also get changed. The story, filled with succeeding surprises and twists, continues hereafter. These characters are not entangled in any extra ordinary contexts or situations but explore the realities of life around us, as they are inevitably settled in contemporary social and political environment.

Tendulkar's *xDamn You Fate* is a story of a politician and a common man exchanging places. It is a political satire. The story starts when a corrupted chief minister meets the common man (normal civilian). During the course of his discussion chief minister reveals how difficult is politics all about and common man reveals how difficult is life of normal civilian in our nation. The story takes a u-turn, when gathering of aggressive people come towards chief minister, before he figures out the

purpose of crowd, he insists the common man to change the clothes to get away from the crowd. But by fate of destiny while changing their clothes, their faces got changed too and then the play continues completely unpredictable till end.

The stark contrast between the two characters in *Damn You Fate* and the queer situation in which they have come in contact with each other introduce the dramatic element immediately and goes on intensifying through their conversation further and further. The play appeals to the thought process of the viewers/readers, rather than their sensitivities and emotional susceptibilities. This is achieved through minimization of 'actions' or 'actual happenings' on the stage. In the play we find two major 'actions' viz. the exchange of faces along with the clothes between the two characters twice, which triggers off the peculiar situations elaborated through dialogue between just two characters. The viewer's/reader's attention is transfixed to the twists and turns of the dialogues and makes him introspect, ponder and think. The scanty use of 'actual happening' on the stage enhances the proper dramatic interpretations, as it helps in shifting the focus of the play to the thought process of the viewers. Every comment, every remark, every suggestion becomes magnifyingly evocative, which would otherwise would have been lost in the sensational effects of the overpowering actions or happenings.

In the play both A and B are two side of a coin. One is a dethroned knacky CM while the other is a crawling middle class clerk. Through the dismissed CM Tendulkar has presented a fraudulent picture of our politicians, the actual work in action of the leaders chosen by the masses. He has revealed the whole inside story of the so-called democratic government. For e.g. in act one A (the real clerk) evaluates the charges censured on the dethroned CM. and calls him chief of corruption! Patron of smugglers, builders, hoodlums and kiln makers! A accuses him of stuffing his unworthy toadies with gold and silver! Of making his *bahu* clear the medical exams through the back doors! Total Nepotism! Of robbing the businessmen and factory owners in the name of fund collection! Of harboring the bloody criminals against the spurious drug racket! He calls him a buccaneer. He says every road is full of the advertisements of B's deeds. He calls him a thief! A builder's broker! A sycophant! A murderer! A briber! And an agent of prostitutes!

The play unveils Rivalry as the main spring of power politics which later on at personal level turns out to be effective in the entire game. As the sacked CM reveals that all the scurrilous bull shit in the newspapers is nothing but character assassination, a treacherous conspiracy planned by his rivals to remove him from the center. He speaks aloud that his rivals have poached his entire staff consisting of the profound thinkers and intellectuals. He condemns the charge of embezzlement placed on him. He says that he belongs to a well-placed royal family and has countless wealth to his name. He could feed two CMs and three Cabinets together at one and the same time. “...*Hamare makaan ka barthroom tumhare poore makaan se bada hoga...yrh sab mauroosi hai...hamein rupye ki kya garaj!*”¹ he further says, “*paisa aaya, virodhi anumaan karte hain isse zyada aaya. Agar zaroorat hoto hum hi tumko details de sakte hain. Baat itni zaoor hai ki paisa hamare ghar mein raha nahin.*” (HTK13). The dethroned CM says that there were misdeeds but that doesn’t mean he committed them only. He asks the clerk that has he created the government machinery. Does he run the hospitals? Did he manufacture those fatal injections? Did he choose his unworthy colleagues? He says being a mere human being either he could solve the problems of people or act as a spy police. He says he’s ready to take the moral responsibility of what ever has happened. But his treacherous colleagues have no right to cry for it because they also know that one has to play true and false in order to run a government. “*sab kuch khol kar nahin bata sakte hain. Kuch maukon par jhoot bhi bolna padta hai, apradhion ko sangrakshan bhi dena padta hai*” (HTK13). He claims that the rackets against which his rivals are muck raging today; once upon a time they were his accomplices. Why didn’t they opposed there only, giving their resignations?

In continuation the CM also disclosed the trick he applied in twice letting the government fail. How he played the two parties off against each other. He tells A that firstly, he provided the opposition and the newspapers with some confidential details. Secondly, he did so after giving in his resignation. But his support was a mere technical one because at the time of taking the decision he was kept out of the scene, and so maintaining the confidentiality of that decision was not his moral responsibility. In spite of being a minister he wasn’t taken in confidence, as the current CM was suspicious about him. And his suspicion was a genuine one because by being the member of the cabinet the current CM got the previous CM dismissed. And in this conspiracy of his B was his

accomplice. Being aware of this fact, the current CM placed B in his cabinet realizing that his absence might turn out to be more dangerous than his presence there. But since B was not consulted in taking the decision, he knocked down the current CM.

The play provides some very important tips for keeping an upper hand in Power Politics. According to B (the real CM) Politics is not just for any Tom, Dick and Harry. It requires a lot of hard work. It can be learnt only through self-experience, as to quote B “*hamara politics khelte khelte seekhna padta hai*” (HTK16). And nonetheless one should always know how to milk a situation. To learn politics B joined Respected Bhagwan Raoji Bispute’s candidacy. There he learned a lot through his observations. Bhagwan Raoji was a white sepulcher. As soon as he took B in his confidence, B dethroned him from the ministry and for the first time gained self-confidence, which is very essential for a strong public image. According to B once a person gains confidence rest is all brainwork. He says that all depends on who uses his intellect first, “*rajniti ka matlab hai khopadiyon ki race...*” (HTK16).

Insinuation in politics calls for serious candidature, changing of parties (being a turn coat), knowing-towing, being a traitor, a leap frog, a hideous humbug, being smart in playing the most shrewd games when required and making money hand over fist. The fake CM (the real A) reveals that even if the boss is worthless, snooty and venal, he must be kept happy. He should be made to believe that he’s the most generous man on earth. If he snubs you then that action of his should also be tolerated as applause, because it all proves effective in the long run.

To become an astute politician one should be a turncoat because staying just with one party doesn’t work. One has to stay active from both sides and get along with the party that wins. Just like B (that real CM) in the play, who reveals that although currently he’s been strengthening the position of the PM, he is also playing an accomplice to those involved in sacking the PM.

The die-hard desire for authority, the tendencies and fears of those who have got it and those who are craving for it, are remarkably revealed in the play. In Act two the ex-CM (real B) has been hankering for his earlier position. He is ready to apply all possible tricks for it. He suggests means after means to catch hold of his aim and B (real A) keeps on explaining their futility.

In constitutional elections the politicians are not even aware of the current state of their constituencies, but still they win. However, our canny politicians have always been skilled in the art of haranguing the masses, what an irony! Such typical demagogues all exist in our society and to take an example we have B (the real CM) in Damn You Fate. Who tells A, the clerk in Act one that since his residence doesn't fall within his constitutional boundaries he had never visited that tribal region from past so many years. He tells him that for winning the elections it's not essential to visit the constituency personally. His agents keep visiting the region quite frequently, providing money and other necessities to the people living there. "*adiwasi daridra rekha ke niche aate hain, imaandar hote hain...voter log hamein bhale hi na pehchaante hon, lekin hamare admiyon ko pehchaante hain...*" (HTK18). He says that he visits his constituency once before the elections are held.

Our political leaders just for the sake of publicity hold public meetings. Public welfare is done on paper only. It's all just a fraudulent show. Moreover our leaders of the nation are more bothered about lining their pockets than indulging in any sort of genuine mass welfare.

Today the politicians are so audacious that they commit imperceptible thefts in an aggressive way with impunity. And later they very quietly launder their illegally obtained money off shore. For e.g. in the First Act of the play when B, the sacked CM, is censured by A, the real clerk, of having a Swiss Bank account for keeping his illegal income. B says that nobody ever manifests his income earned through unfair means, such particulars are never revealed. B tells A that if one is keeping such accounts or eating up commissions in different governmental dealings then he should not discuss such matters publicly. Like illegitimate relationships such matters should be voiced in private. He tells A that he's uselessly discussing B's scandals because B had already declared that he's ready to face any enquiry commission. B says that the point lies in the fact that whether such a charge is implicated or not

Another rather satirical in appearance but literally true to the core of it, reference is B's (real A) remark, when he says, that he never imagined that he could turn out to be such a treacherous person. He tells A (real B) that he grew under good impressions. His father lived as a faithful person and died as one. He had faithfulness towards home, faithfulness towards family, towards town, towards caste, towards religion. His father used to smoke *bidis* and was even faithful towards the particular

horse brand *bidi*. “...aise nishthawaan pitah ka betahokar bhi kaise itni dagabaazi hamare bheetar utri, samajh mein nahin aata.” (HTK38)

An example of bloody hypocrisy is visible in the words of A, the real clerk, who in Act Two becomes B i.e. the new CM. While enjoying the lust of politics and the pleasure found in applying maneuvered devices for sustaining the CM ship, he advises B, the real CM, who’s now destined as a clerk in the story that life of a middle class person is the most peaceful. Enjoying the lavishness of an elite lifestyle, he narrates the advantages of a middle class life. He poses to be downcast but behind the scenes he was just at ease, an inward-looking impregnable politician.

Hypocrisy is the canker in the soul our society and *Damn You Fate!* itself is an open example of such latent hypocrisy. Tendulkar has bitterly censured the autobiographies written by the elite figures of our society. The play exposes the hidden intoned association of our political leaders with terrorists, our leaders who on one hand talk aloud of realizing the country entirely from terrorism and on the other hand they themselves are in cahoots with them. Today when our politicians need to endeavour for mitigating distress, every harrowing happening, major or minor, in the country is seen as a pre-planned course of action. The play calls upon for an all out attack on such hawkish, arrant politicians, forming an ascendant section of society, who, instead of having the spirit of nationalism and working for the betterment of the country, are busy in their own importunate welfare. Instead of making an effort to remove corruption from the country they rather condone it.

Tendulkar has groused against the grubby aspects of politics. Criminals get released with the connivance of the corrupt police and government officials under the aegis of our politicians. This play is an indication of defiance against such an allegedly corrupt government. In the present time when the majority of the country’s population is surviving below the poverty line, our ministers need to be criticized for their profligacy.

The sheer game of politics has hitherto been against the welfare of the masses and if such hideous game of power and avarice continues amongst the leaders by the people, of the people and for the people, the downfall of this nation is almost inevitable. *Damn You Fate* is a denunciation of the despotic government of the country that needs to be amended. It also

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presents an incisive and intelligent critique of our society and is capable enough to incline the masses to shun the dirt and illegalities in our social system.

Tendulkar has interestingly presented in the midst of this nefarious political system, the agonies, suffocation, tensions and turmoil of the middle class people. He has exposed the hypocrisy inherent in the accepted social norms. The most shameless part of the devastation of contemporary politics is a satanic philosophy to whitewash the undaunted dirtiness of the misdeeds. This philosophy conveniently evades the responsibility of the misdeeds and boosts hypocrisy. All this, though presented in a lighter vein and disguised as fun, is very disturbing. Here Tendulkar has daringly mocked at the current political set up making the viewer/reader feel guilty of living with it shamelessly.

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Works Cited:

1. *Hatt Teri Kismat*, hindi translation Smt. Vimal Deo (New Delhi: Vidya Prakashan Mandir, 1992), p.12. The subsequent references from this play have been cited from this edition and the page number is given within the body of the paper itself.