

:: STRUCTURE ::**14.0 Objectives****14.1 Introduction****14.2 Performative Structure of the Play****14.3 Language and Style****14.4 Dramatic Techniques****14.4.1 Music and Dance****14.4.2 The Human Wall****14.5 Let Us Sum Up****14.6 Key Words****14.7 Suggested Reading**

14.0 OBJECTIVES

With the study of this unit, you will be able to:

- learn about the performative structure of the play;
- understand the use of language by Tendulkar;
- discuss some important dramatic techniques used by Tendulkar;
- understand the blend of song and dance resulting into an amalgamation of old and new theatre's performances.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

As you read the play, you may have noticed the techniques Tendulkar uses. The director's job seems simple. Variations and dramatic effects seem to be inherent. So far, previous units have provided a brief introduction to Indian theater in general and Marathi theater in particular. We also read about the life and work of Tendulkar. We then discussed the setting of the play: the historical context and the people on which it was based, the central theme of power and the way power works in a society concerned with the social or political issues. Here we mean hierarchies of class, caste, and gender in which some dominate and oppress others. This section examines issues related to form, the technique by which the playwright effectively communicates his or her vision. In short, how and how the subject is expressed.

We will first discuss the use of language and style, and other dramatic techniques that Tendulkar uses to achieve his goals. Remember that literature can have more than one interpretation. Read the plays and discussions carefully and critically so you can make your own decisions.

14.2 PERFORMATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY

The play's performance format is based on motifs from a number of Marathi folk plays. The following are the major points of this idiom are *Khela*, the *Dashavatar*, the *Tamasha*, the *Gondhal*, the *Bharud*, and *Waghya –Murlī*. (Samik Bandyopadhyaya, 'Introduction' to the English text, 1986, p., 4-5). Bandyopadhyaya cites a note of Theatre Academy:

“The basic structure of the play is a human wall, which is basically a singing and dancing chorus, personally commenting on the episodic developments. But it also breaks into smaller tableaux, grouping and regrouping endlessly. The human wall ceases to exist when its back is turned to the audience. The Sutradhar or narrator interposes in the proceedings to keep the audience abreast of things, the actors switching parts with perfect timing. A touch of opera with verse, music and prose fusing into one another in a strange, compelling alchemy. The ballet, blending with the traditional folk dances, sets the mood and tempo of the decadent and bawdy era” (Bandyopadhyaya, p.5.)

The mimetic shape of the play is another noteworthy characteristic of the performance structure that the aforementioned writer overlooks. The play is primarily mimetic in nature, with only a few dialogues. The dialogues are choric even when they are uttered. The use of Lavani's singing adds to the irony of the scenario.

The chorus in the performance is required to perform both as a collective and as actors. They serve as the stage's wall or cyclorama; they play Brahmins, soldiers, attendants, priests, and everything else. In the garden, they also serve as trees and stones. They act as inanimate items in Nana's house and garden as Nana is chasing Lalita Gauri. The perfection of the song, performed with intonations, rising and falling by the chorus, and the time with which the chorus performers interchange roles, are the highlights of the performance. The utilisation of minimum property and sets is another highlight of the performance.

Hence, it is recommended that *Ghasiram Kotwal* should be read as a performance text rather than a written text.

14.3 LANGUAGE AND STYLE

We are often told that "Style is the man himself". And each literary work bears its own imprint of the particular idiom of the writer. For example, one could say that the style of one playwright is different from that of another playwright. For example, Shakespeare's style is different from Shaw's. But in a play, the writer speaks through the people of different

characters. And so the style should change depending on the character's personality. In fact, an educated person speaks differently from an uneducated person. In short, everyone has their own style. And the success of a playwright lies in being able to write lines to suit the character's personality.

In Ghashiram Kotwal, we have a wide range of characters from the mighty Nana to the members of Chorus. How far has Tendulkar managed to give us the kind of dialogue that suits his characters? But before we do that, let's consider the fact that what we have in front of us is a translation play.

Translation of the Play:

Translation is more than simply rewriting Marathi text into English. It also means translating into English the cultural context of 18th century Pune. There is no doubt that Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliot succeeded in making the translation as accurate as possible in the spirit of the original. When translating a drama, the translator often adapts the play to the needs and expectations of the audience in the target language. Character translations are not possible, as literary texts require minor modifications. Eleanor Zelliot, the translator said: Tendulkar's play demands and inspires creativity and provides an example of the abuse of Marathi, which literally translates as "Oh, worthless." This sounded rather bland, so the translators thought the original replacement would be "You shape a piece of shit!" as a punch needed.

Many of the serious theatres were performed in Hindi translation and that even in Delhi. The translated plays were of great dramatists namely Brecht and Beckett. Western performances were limited to Western plays either in English or in translation. Many of the urban theatres have now begun to perform plays written in Hindi and regional languages. However, plays available in English language offer a great range of audience with no bar to language barriers. The play begins with the prayer to Ganapati and Saraswati. The translation of the hymns is done such a way that it does not lose rhythm of the original.

Rhyme of the play adds to its musicality. Culture-related words such as "Bhatji buva", "sindur", "lavani", and "kirtan" have been preserved in the original. An explanation is provided at the beginning of the text instead of a translation. As in abuse, the flavor of the original idiom is preserved. "May you itch without cause" and "I would have you riding backward on a donkey with Sindur all over your head" Arrogant Nana calls herself "we" in revenge. For example, he tells the servant, "We will have you killed." He promises Gauri: "But our devotion is limited to this elegant image...." It is a custom amongst royalty in India and the West to refer to themselves in the plural. For example, Queen Victoria often said, "We're not amused."

Dialogues in the play are not long but they are very effective and full of wit. More often just like 'Tamasha' tradition, this play also has use of

abusive language. You will observe that only Sutradhar has got some long dialogues. In comparison to Sutradhar, only Nana has got some long soliloquies through which we learn his intentions for Ghashiram. Vijay Tendulkar on his style of language said: 'But this is a question of my playing with various styles and levels rather than of conscious planning. I am in fact at ease in many styles of language' (1971, Rajinder Paul).

This language analysis is very evident in the following dialogue between

Nana and Ghashiram:

Nana: Bastard. You've got me in a narrow pass.

Ghashiram: Yes, the narrow pass of my only daughter.

In addition to this the use of pun in the play can be observed in the following dialogue:

There's only one Nana

The rest are na-na-na-na. (p.21)

And pun can also be observed in the interchangeable use of 'brutish' instead of 'British' which focuses on the nature of British Empire in India.

Moreover, slapstick comedy can also be seen in the dialogues between Sutradhar and Brahman:

Sutradhar : Ho Ho Ho Bhatji Buwa!

Wait now, wait now. Hold your horses! Must you go?

Brahman : Forces? Whose forces? Foreign? English?

Sutradhar : Not forces! Hold your horses!

Brahman : So I'm stopped. What do you have to say?

Sutradhar : Where is your honour going so late at night?

Brahman : Nowhere, nowhere. It's all right.

Sutradhar : Where is nowhere?

Brahman : Just near somewhere.

Sutradhar : Somewhere is near where?

Brahman : Go away. Don't wait. Its getting late. (p. 3)

A part from language, tone is also worth to interpret. In the dialogue by Sutradhar his tone presents the implied sarcasm. This can be seen in the following dialogue between Sutradhar and Brahman:

Brahman : Oy. Oy. You son of a bitch. Don't you have eyes and ears?

Sutradhar : I'm sorry, O priestly Brahman.

Brahman : Don't you have any manners?

Sutradhar : I'm so sorry, O lordly Brahman.

Brahman : Don't you have any brains.

Sutradhar : I'm very sorry. O honoured Brahman (p. 4).

The play has got all the varieties including poetic dialogues, songs, humming, silence and mime. The presence of this range of variety make the drama complex and rich piece of art.

13.4 DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES

While reading any drama we first try to understand its theme by asking a question 'What is it about?' You may also observe if there is any hidden

message or function of the play. Just like any piece of art, drama too has something to offer, it may focus on ‘instructing by pleasing’. This will definitely make the spectators feel like crying, laughing or lead them to deep thinking. In an interview by M. Maharishi (1973), we learn, “To my mind the function of theatre today is not just to entertain, nor just to reveal certain ironies and contradictions of man’s mind and behaviour nor just to philosophise or sermonize over certain socio-political issues. For me the major function of theatre today is to help man to know and discover himself in relation to his environment’. So let’s move to inquire about the techniques used in this present drama.

3.4.1 Music and Dance

Many plays are written with rhythmic and musical qualities which are core elements of *tamasha* and *powada* folk theatre. In the play the main line ‘Shree Ganaraya Nartan Kari, Amhi Punyache Baman Hari’ which means ‘Ganpati dances the Ganpati Dance, and we are Brahmins of Pune’. We find this line recurring almost throughout the play. The tempo, mood, emotion, and musical theme of this line changes with the progress of the play. For instance in the prologue the tempo and mood of the line is slow, calm and happy however when Ghashiram is stoned to death, the tempo and mood of the line is fast and full of anger. Moreover, when the singer sings *Radhe Krishna Hari, Mukund Murari*, it is accompanied with *lavani* dance where the mood is full of anger and gestures of the dancer is jerky and forceful.

Hence, we can observe that in order to express cruelty and savagery in drama, Tendulkar has taken the help of music which makes the drama a worth watching experience.

The use of chorus is also interestingly used in the play. According to V Shyamala in her article “Design in the text” said, “In Ghashiram, the chorus operates with greater flexibility. The group, about twelve strong serves to indicate numerical strength, conformity, spread of an idea even rumor, or take physical shapes indicating locations and moods. The chorus modifies the sentences on occasions, to yield a very different sense. The narrator functions. He leads the comment, he joins the group and separates from it, play some roles in illustrate the point. This particular device facilitates the pace of the play”.

3.4.2 The Human Wall

‘The Human Wall’ is part of the basic structure of the play. This wall is basically a singing and dancing chorus that personally comment on the episodic developments of the play. ‘The Human Wall’ is formed of twelve men dressed as Brahmans. ‘The Human Wall’ enters the stage in the beginning of the play and ceases to exist when its back is turned to the audience. Rajinder Nath, the producer of the play uses the wall and this has been observed by Rajinder Paul on which he commented as, “From an aesthetically clothed backdrop, he [Rajinder Nath] rhythmically

removes one Brahman like a brick to make a cut-out window, from behind which emerges a female figure on the look-out for a noble catch”.

‘The Human Wall’ is replaced with a curtain that was very common in a conventional stage. Above this, the human wall helps in the transition from one scene to another. It also plays a role of chorus in the play. The chorus moves from left to right and back again, singing and dancing it offers an account of the action of the play and in a way it also gives us an impression of folk theatre.

Moreover, the members of the wall also get transformed into an individual role, assuming the part of the group in Gulabi’s hall sitting scene. Over and above the Brahmans, performing as ‘The Human Wall’ form a human god house round Ganapati, and when the Nana chases a girl, they become a garden. Throughout the play we can see the human wall assuming new and visually stimulating configurations. And at the end of the play, at Ghashiram’s execution, the human wall becomes the fierce mob which is shouting with sadistic glee.

• **Check Your Progress : I**

1. Discuss the use of the Human Wall and cite example.

2. Write a brief note on the language and style of the play.

3. Discuss the Dramatic Techniques used in the play by Tendulkar.

14.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the language and style of the play. As the play is translated from Marathi to English there were many aspects of language and style which were worth to focus on. Moreover, the effective use of the folk theatre form as part its presentation is also focused in this unit. In addition to this, the unit also presents an overview of integration of song and dance to the action of the play. Theatrical device like the use

of the Human Wall is also used effectively to control the flow of the story.

14.6 KEY WORDS

Mimetic	The way in which the real world and human behaviour is represented in art or literature
Cyclorama	A circular picture of a 360° scene, viewed from inside
Sermonize:	To give moral advice, especially when it is boring or not wanted
Conformity	Behaviour or actions that follow the accepted rules of society

14.7 SUGGESTED READING

- *Collected Plays in Translation: Kamala, Silence! the Court Is in Session, Sakharam Binder, the Vultures, Encounter in Umbugland, Ghashiram Kotwal, a Friend's Story, Kanyadaan.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2003.
- Tendulkar, Vijay. *Ghashiram Kotwal.* Calcutta: Seagull, 1986.
- Tendulkar, Vijay. *Ghashiram Kotwal: A Reader's Companion.* M. Sarat Babu, Asia Book Club, 2003.