
THE RETURN OF GANDHI: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract: *The Return of Gandhi* is an interesting and thought provoking play written by Dr. D. Vizai Bhaskar. Any drama for that matter would aim at some change. This particular drama is focussed on the social conditions existed in the society and discusses how difficult it is to change the unchangeable situations. So much reformation is needed to change the existing social order. Gandhi being a ever inspirational personality would always motivate people of different mindsets and typical social setup. This particular play is imaginative and the title is highly symbolic and informative. Gandhi Mahatma coming back to life and observes post-independent India and its corrupt conditions is undoubtedly a novel thought of the writer. Technique of getting a dead man back to life is a fascinating effort by the dramatist to attract the readers. On the whole *The Return of Gandhi* is an interesting page turner and an outstanding socio-political play.

Keywords: Socio-Political Play, Social Order, Symbolic.

Introduction: *The Return of Gandhi* is written in 1999. This play is very significant in its theme and structure. Political conditions of India after independence are dealt by the dramatist very interestingly in this play. Political and social realities are presented in his dramas very effectively with the support of mythical devices. Any country or state is not free from political unrest. A basic element in Gandhi's political thought was his faith in the right of every country to evolve a system best suited to its genius; and in India's case it was what he called Ramraj, i.e ' ' sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority.'

Gandhi's ideas are mine of stimulating thought on political, social, economic, cultural and spiritual issues. He was no erudite scholar, by no means an original thinker with a razor sharp mind, nor a brilliant theoretician. But solidly grounded in the ancient Indian tradition, he possessed a profound moral earnestness which enabled him to discover the ethical values of this tradition; and with his convictions supposed by similar trends in ancient and modern western thought, he boldly applied his findings to the political and social realities of colonial India. As he himself declared, ' I have presented no new principles, but tried to restate old principles'; and ' I have nothing new to teach the world.' Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills.

In the opening scene of *The Return of Gandhi* when Mahatma Gandhi was told by Chitra Gupta that he has committed a great sin of winning independence to India. Gandhi was shocked and asked him to elaborate on that point. Then Chitra Gupta elaborates it:

The languishing race in feudal society for ages marked with hero worship and dynastic adulation, understands only dependence –not independence. The gullible masses who were divided by caste, religion cannot appreciate the principles of equality. The people at large were illiterate, ignorant and innocent. The few educated were careless and irresponsible. The selfish and immoral rulers always indulged in power game, encouraged faction and further divided the people in the name of language, religion, culture and the like. What kind of rule can the country expect from such rulers? The nation at large was thrown into a vicious circle. Giving independence to such people and power to such leaders naturally proved suicidal. My Lord killing a person is sin. But trying to kill the whole nation? The biggest sin. And this man committed that biggest sin. Hence, it is prayed that appropriate punishment be imposed on this man.(21-22:2012.)[1]

Yama punished Gandhi and said that:

He should be sent back to the same country where he has fought for independence and sovereignty. He should live among those people for whose up-liftment he underwent imprisonment and punishment. He should be deported to his homeland for thirty days. He should be shown how his so called innocent beloved people and their leaders are behaving today. (23:2012)[1]

According to Mahatma “ Rama Rajyam is the ideal state... he dreamt of” . It is a new social order where villages are autonomous, self-sufficient. The ‘Swaraj’ of his dreams was self-government based on adult franchise, to be attained by ‘educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority’. It recognised ‘no race or religious distinction ‘, nor was it ‘isolated independence’ making for fruitful international co-operation. This ‘Swaraj’ could be attained by the practice of purely non-violent means. Social reform was for Gandhi only an inevitable part of the struggle for true ‘Swaraj’. He believed that ‘social re-ordering and political Swaraj must go hand in hand’. His social ideal was ‘an equalisation of status’, with class distinctions being abolished. He championed the cause of women’s freedom, denouncing child marriage, the dowry system and enforced widowhood. He opposed birth-control by artificial means and advocated self-control and voluntary chastity instead. A stern critic of the evil of drinking, he said that Purna Swaraj (complete independence) was impossible of attainment by people who were slaves of intoxicating drinks and drugs.

In the economic sphere Gandhi totally rejected the concept of the ‘economic man’, and refused to divorce economics from ethics. He preached ‘Sarvodaya’ (the good of all) –ethical socialism, which was to be achieved through decentralisation of industry; the establishment of rural communities composed of small, manageable units co-operatively knit together, Swadeshi and Khadi spinning and the implementation of the Tolstoyan doctrine of ‘bread labour’. He advocated the voluntary acceptance of the idea of ‘trusteeship’ by the capitalists in order to prevent the economic exploitation of the weaker sections of the society.

Gandhi Jayanthi is celebrated on October 2nd throughout India. Politicians organise public gatherings to commemorate Gandhi and address the gatherings on Gandhian principles, Rajaram, a disciple of Gandhi pays a visit to the tomb of Gandhi and memorises him by offering salutes, surprisingly the tomb breaks up and Gandhi comes back to life like Jesus Christ who happen to resurrect on Easter(Sunday) . The second coming of Gandhi is very significant. Gandhi asks Rajaram about the rulers and people in India. Rajaram explains to Gandhi about the corrupt conditions of India and how the taxes were collected from people and how the leaders are going behind world bank for debts.

Gandhiji’s is anxious to know about the two principles of truth and non-violence proposed by him. He is disappointed to know that these two principles are almost forgotten and nobody is willing to practice them anymore. The statues of Gandhi also are not to remember him or offer tribute to him but to have political benefit. The conversation between the engineer and contractor stands as a witness for that. The engineer questions, “Does a statue with a cloak and a stick cost three lakhs? And two lakhs additionally for its pedestal?” (29). The mismanagement of public money and property is also very rampant in India and that can be understood by the construction of MLA’s father’s statue with the money which is allotted for the construction of Gandhi’s statue.

In this play unfair means of election process is also dealt clearly. Ruling party and opposition party fight for the right conduct of elections but in reality that doesn’t happen. Mahatama Gandhi wanted to exercise his vote along with Rajaram and shocked to know the unfair means of voting system. Both Rajaram and Gandhi are in the queue . People are voting one by one. Kallu Sambaiah who’s in the queue is seen speaking over the phone.

Yes, you have been giving Brandy and Biryani for the past four days. The other fellow gave cell phone last night. We should not deceive anybody. It's a sin. That's why I have voted for both. (he goes away. Gandhiji comes to the Polling Officer)

P.O 1 says:

You don't have vote. it was there in the list, but it's "over" Gandhiji questions what do you mean by over? PO responds that it is already done by someone. 'who has done it? Asked Gandhi. Look , master, our duty is only to see that the vote is cast properly. The identification of voters is not our responsibility. (41:2012)[1]

Open ballot, rigging, cycling, booth capturing, box snatching, ballot tearing, water pouring. (43:2012) are other tricks to disturb proper voting system.

Gandhiji was upset and asks Rajaram , what is this Rajaram? India today, answers Rajaram. Gandhiji would like to meet the so called "Peoples Representatives" who make a mockery of the election process and find their way to Assembly and Parliament through foul means.

The fight between opposition party and ruling party is another example of political degradation in independent India. Opposition party leader points out that:

There is no security for a woman MLA even in the Assembly. My God! What a useless government is this! As long as this government is in power, I won't step into Assembly. (Now the assembly is like a war field. Nobody cares for the appeals of the speaker, ' Sit down, please sit down, silence please" . Then the speaker makes an announcement 'The house is adjourned till tomorrow.' (48:2012).[1]

Ruling party leader tried to bribe Gandhi if he supports them is another trace of political corruption:

Look here, gentleman, we are not bothered whether you are a real Gandhi or a fake one. But people believe that you are real. They are ready to obey your orders. "If" you support our party, we will give you a decent house in Jubilee hills with a car and a phone. We will arrange yearly four foreign trips for you. For your benefit, we will turn a profit-making public sector undertaking into a sick unit and privatize it in favour of your people. What do you say? (58:2012)

Gandhiji is upset about the political situations and felt really bad about the present condition:

Politics without scruples, scientific knowledge minus humanity, happiness without conscience, worship without sacrifice, business without ethics wealth without hard work and education without character – are the seven VICES which our politicians have acquired. And they have to shun these VICES. (66:2012)

Gandhi's speech on TV motivated many people to question the government. And all the politicians are unhappy about it and plan to prove Gandhi as a culprit for all these disturbances. Finally Gandhiji is imprisoned and prosecuted and given a hanging punishment by the judge. The play ends with the punishment of Gandhi. The last words of Gandhi to the people carries the spirit of the play and Gandhi's last words are very heart rendering:

All these days my intention has been to bring about transformation in the minds of the cruel. But my observation is that violence, cruelty, selfishness and what not all harmful vices are thriving at the cost of good. The good is getting extinguished day by day. This may lead to total annihilation of virtues leading the society in to anarchy and chaos. This is to be stopped forthwith. During my last birth, I advocated purely non-violence, as I believed *Ahimsa Paramodharmaha*. But tolerance is being construed as inefficiency. This should not continue. Now I prefer to adhere to No-Violence – '*Nirhimsa*', which is greater than Ahimsa

in which violence would be tackled firmly to protect the good and innocent. To propagate this, I will come back again, not in the human form, but in the purest form of consciousness - *Chaitanya Swaroopa*. I will be everywhere and anywhere. There will be no barriers and frontiers for my presence. I will be in the green leaves and blooming flowers. I will be in the rays of rising sun and the brightening Moon. I will be in the shining Stars and raining Clouds. In the dawn and dusk, in the air and water and pervade every nook and corner of my motherland. I will become the body, mind and soul of common man to unearth the hidden, illegal treasures, to prevent the immoral ways of power and to cut down the crooked wings of untruth, the wicked strings of selfishness. Beware! Be careful! I will come like spring thunder! Yes! I will come again. Again and again to this holy land till the end of political turmoil (82:2012[1]).

On the whole the play is an interesting political exposition which focuses on the political unrest in post-independent India. This play can definitely enlighten the people regarding the corruption in the society and politics. Dr. Vizai Bhaskar being a visionary writer has touched upon democracy, politics, society, economic conditions and corruption in India.

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