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## Absurdity of Internal Caste Conflict in Bapu Ghokshe's *Vishari Paalwi*

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### Introduction:

Bapu Ghokshe is a renowned playwright in Marathi literature. He wrote majorly one-act plays. He also wrote radio plays. Bapu Ghokshe started his writing career in 1989. His first one-act play is '*Vishari Paalwi*' which was written in 1986. It was first published in his collection of one-act plays '*Father*' in 1997. His other popular one-act plays in this collection are '*Chakwa*' and '*Father*'. '*Vishari Paalwi*' won several prizes in state level one-act play competitions. The play was first staged on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1986 and won first prize for best male actor, director and special prize for best female character. It also attracted criticism of a score of playwrights and critics. The play hammers an unbearable assault on internal caste conflict within Indian society. It sarcastically comments on rural politics and its very fundamental base of caste conflict. The present research paper attempts to put light on above mentioned conflicts in the play.

### Thematic Exploration:

The play opens in a Dalit Vasti (colony of Dalit people) where a retired school teacher, Daamleguruji alias Appa, lives with his young daughter, Maya. Daamleguruji is struggling to get his pension sanctioned for last two years. His higher authority demanded a recommendation letter from local MLA for quick sanction of his pension. This is against of his principles. He had never bowed before anybody or had never begged for anything

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for any cause. Daamleguruji is a staunch follower of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his philosophies. The curtain raiser background voice is suggestive. It reminds us of Dr. Ambedkar's historical message to downtrodden communities – "To educate, to unite and to agitate". The play compels us to ponder on fractions of the unity of downtrodden community which probably shattered dreams of Dr. Ambedkar. The play, therefore, basically puts forth a mirror before the community and compels to introspect and re-introspect. This partly paralyzed old man worries about his daughter's marriage. Maya is a benevolent girl. She even gives out some flour that was finally left in kitchen to Sarjakaku whose family had been starving for last two days. Maya dreams but she is not sure that dreams may come true.

In the first scene, Daamleguruji comes to know that Annasaheb Kantake, the Patil of the village has summoned Maya as a maid at his home. Daamleguruji gets irritated because he already knows ill nature of Kantake, who had been alumni of guruji. The old man is still courageous and bold. Then enters on the stage a graduated youth, Gautam. He is also alumni of guruji. He is involved in Naamaantar (Changing name or title) Movement of presently known Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University of Aurangabad. Gautam is striving for unity of the community. Appa (guruji) believes that the future of Dalit community is returning towards the past. There is lack of unity and unanimity. He observes that Indians have adopted 'Divide and Rule' policy of British government. If the community were united, there would not have been burnings of Dalit Vastis or incidents of rapes on women of the downtrodden; neither there would have been oppose to Naamaantar Movement nor the assaults of the opponents upon martyrs of the movement. Gautam firmly believes that a day will come when all Dalit community will unite and utilize their giant power for the protection of rights of the people. The conversation between Appa and Gautam exposes present pathetic situation of the community.

The elections of *Graampanchayat* are near. Sahebrao, who was chairman of society, had fought previous elections. He belongs to Dalit community. He is supporter of Kantake. Sahebrao is without self-respect and he is always ready to spoil respect of his community for his benefit. Gautam wishes that Appa must fight this election, as only selfless and

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devoted persons like Appa can fight for welfare of his people. Initially, Appa is not ready to fight the elections. He wishes that the elections should be contested by the youth. He, being an old and sick, is unable to take such a great responsibility. On the contrary, Gautam believes that Appa, having confronted with and digested many instances of injustice in his life, can realize pains and pangs of people. Appa opines that the unity of his community is not easily possible because of selfish leadership. All leaders will be ready to unite the community but everyone will wish to become leader of the Dalit Power. He believes that when power comes in hands of leaders, they don't even hesitate to cut throats of own brothers. Appa will be ready to fight the elections but the so called leaders of the community will be jealous of him. His community is like a lamb fallen into a well. The well is full of water. The lamb is striving to come out of water, it is getting suffocated, and it struggles and kicks in water. It shouts with great pain to come out, but there are wolves outside the well. They are throwing stones at the lamb. They all laugh at him and indifferently watch him dying. It is impossible to take the lamb outside the water because those are his own relatives who are laughing at him. Appa worries that reflections of this pathetic situation of the community must not destroy lives of the youth. Ultimately, Appa becomes ready to join the meeting in Vihaar (Buddhist temple). He enthusiastically rushes for the meeting.

Gautam and Maya are childhood friends. Gautam knows present condition of Appa's family. He knows that Appa's pension is not yet sanctioned hence he is passing through miserable situation. Gautam, knowing that Maya must be hungry and might not have eaten anything since so long, he forcefully gives her few rupees to eat something. The writer here suggests that both might have fallen in love. Maya expresses her dreamful feeling before him. Gautam quotes Shakespeare and replies that life is nothing but like a bubble of water...he will also pass away one day. Maya suddenly expresses her caring feeling towards him. The writer has painted this romantic scene with extremely tender and touching words. Maya, though fallen in love with Gautam, does not directly express her feelings for him, knowing limitations of their relations.

In the second scene of the play, Bapu Ghokshe seems to use the technique of Expressionism. Here we remember Eugene O'Neil's *The Emperor Jones*. The sound

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of the crowds is heard in the background. The sound of musical instruments, beats of the Dhols (drums) and the Dafdes (drum-like rural instrument), rhythmic sound of the Lejhim (jingling instrument), create atmosphere of elections processions and rallies. The sounds of "Jai Ho" from both parties, AnnasahebKantake and Daamleguruji, are roaring in atmosphere. The beats of the dhol and the dafde are suggestive of uproar of elections. Appa with Gautam are busy in election campaign till late night.

Annasaheb Kantake enters on the stage. He offers Appa to withdraw his nomination form. Even he offers him some money. Appa throws the bundle of rupees on the face of Kantake. Appa scolds him and commands him to get out. At this moment Kantake threatens Appa to burn whole Dalit Vasti. Appa agitates and attacks on Kantake. Kantake mercilessly beats Appa with his stick. Appa is beaten so badly still he controls his cry. Sahebrao Gaikwad also tries to influence Appa to withdraw nomination form. Sahebrao says that to become a leader in society, it is necessary to chew bones thrown by some great fellow like AnnasahebKantake. Sahebrao offers few money to Appa to suggest his name for chairmanship of society if Appa wins the election and becomes the sarpanch. Appa annoys at Sahebrao and commands him to go away. Here, Sahebrao also threatens to burn Dalit Vasti. Appa becomes restless and can't believe how Sahebrao could do such disgusting act of burning homes of his own brothers. Sahebrao, while leaving, intimates and warns Appa that he has already hired people from town to create terror, violence and riot in village. Appa is shocked. He addresses the photo of Dr. Ambedkar. He asks Dr. Ambedkar whether he had expected such sort of unity in community. He asks whether he dreamed of such kind of agitation; agitation against own people. At the moment, the Dalit Vasti is put to fire. A loud shout is heard from background. Red flames of fire flare up. Appa, at this moment, rushes to save people caught in fire. Maya protests Appa to go. But he pushes her away and suddenly goes. Gautam comes with great panting and suggests Maya to take Appa and go to taluka town to inform the police about the fire and riot. He then again goes back to save lives of people who are caught in fire and to fight with the gundas.

Lastly, Gautam is badly injured in the riot. He enters at the hut of Appa and suddenly collapses. While dying, he informs Appa and Maya that he fought with them and driven them away. He also says that his community needs people like Appa. Gautam dies.



**Daamleguruji as an angry young man:**

Daamleguruji in this play may be called an angry young man. He opines that Dalit community must be united. The people of so called downtrodden community must have power. The socio-economic development of the community will not be possible without having power. Achievement of power is only possible when the community is strongly united. Unfortunately, the people like Sahebrao Gaikwad are sold at the hands of established class of society. Despite of his old age, Daamleguruji has not lost his enthusiasm and zest. Though he is physically old, he still has courage and determination like a youth. He initially denies to partake in the grampanchayat elections as a candidate for the seat of sarpanch. But when he identifies potential of Gautam who has devoted himself to the movement, Daamleguruji prepares his mind to fight the elections. He knows that someone must come forward to lead the community. The people of his village also wish that he must contest the elections. When the houses of Dalit Vasti are put to fire, Daamleguruji runs to save the people caught in fire. He tells Maya to go to taluka place with Gautam and immediately inform the police. His courage and anger are clearly seen in the last scene. He is the man who realizes pains and sufferings of the people.

**Absurdity of internal caste conflict:**

Daamleguruji is exploited by the system. His pension has not been sanctioned for two years. He frequently visited his upper officers and requested for the sanction of his pension. He knows very well that he is deliberately harassed by the system. This is only because of his belonging to so called lower caste. He is asked by his upper officer to get recommendation letter from MLA, only then his pension can be immediately sanctioned. Daamleguruji is self-esteemed person. He never bowed before anybody. He is a self-respectful person. He is a staunch follower of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. He believes in Dr. Ambedkar's historical message to downtrodden community "To educate, to unite and to agitate". Daamleguruji wishes to contribute his efforts in fulfilling dream of Dr. Ambedkar. He believes that agitation of his people must be against of the system. His community must get their fundamental rights. They must have a respectful status in the society. This is possible when people will seek education and then unite to fight for their rights. People will have to struggle to achieve political power. Without political



power in hands, they won't be able to make overall progress. Daamleguruji hates the people like Sahebrao Gaikwad who have lost self-esteem and self-respect and who curb the movement of his own people. Such types of people are responsible for weakening of the movement. Such sorts of people are selfish, because when they achieve some powerful position in society, they forget that they reached at those heights with support and sacrifice of the people. It is the people who made him hero. On the other hand, people have crablike mentality. They are jealous of their own brothers. They pull legs of their own brothers in this pathetic and ridiculous game of achieving power. Hence, true leaders must arise in the community. Daamleguruji loves and respects youth like Gautam who are struggling for development of community. There are conflicts within the community; there are conflicts amongst the communities. The people like Annasaheb Kantake belong to well-established class of the society. They never agree to see so called lower caste people achieving a powerful place. They never want to lose power at their hands which has been conferred upon them from a long period of time. The people like Sahebrao Gaikwad are the toys at the hands of the well-established class. Such people are ready to kill their own brothers for the sake of own benefit. They are responsible to divide the unity in community. They are like those wolves standing on the edge of the well and throwing stones at innocent lamb struggling to survive in water and striving to come out. Bapu Ghokshe seems to convey that the rivals of any community are not without but within the community. Whenever the downtrodden agitated, their movement was curbed by burning their houses or by attacking violently or by raping women. Many incidents of mob lynching occur every now and then. The exploitation and extortion of the downtrodden will be continued. This can be stopped by adapting to lawful ways. Unity roars with one voice. This uproar only can bring changes in the society. A day must come when all sub-divided political groups and parties will unite forgetting differences in their opinions and policies.

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# Certificate

*This is to certify that the Research paper entitled "Absurdity of Internal Caste Conflict in Bapu Ghokshe's Vishaari Paalwi" submitted by Dr. Manojkumar S. Prakash has been published in "Excel's International Journal of Social Science and Humanities (An International Multidisciplinary Journal)" Vol. 1 No.14 November 2020 Issue, ISSN 2277-7539 (Print) Impact Factor (5.631 SJIF) The Research contribution was greatly appreciated and well received by the Review Board Members. The excel publication house would like to express deep sense of gratitude for your esteemed contribution.*

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(Managing Editor)