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IMPORTANCE OF 'LIFE' AND 'DEATH' IN MAHANIRVAN

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Abstract:

Satish Alekar a famous dramatists of Indian theatre, has his most of the plays, which are rooted in the Marathi language. Lust or desire of society instead of death or life is seen in his play "Mahanirvan". 'Mahanirvan' in the Indian background gives a deeply religious, social and cultural implications, it is synonymous with moksha- salvation. Mahanirvan reminds us the willing exodus of great yogi or karmayogi, the person who desires to excel everyday busy world and reach a perfect pleasure like Buddha or the Mahanirvan. Alekar uses this expression for the death of an very simple, ordinary middle-aged, lower middle –class man, named Baburao. The title of the play 'Mahanirvan' speaks the essential humour and irony in the play. In English the play is translated as "The Dread Departure" gives common routines lives of people through the comical presentation, most important are the rituals instead of death.

Keywords: *Death, Smashan, Desire, Rituals, artistic expressions etc.*

Satish Alekar is a one of the most famous dramatists of Indian theatre. He is famous director, actor in the drama and also performs in Marathi and Hindi cinemas. The play was directed by Alekar and brought on the stage in November 1974 for the first time. He wrote famous plays such as *Mahanirvan* (1974), *Mahapoor* (1975), *Atirekee* (1990), *Pidhijat* (2003), *Mickey ani Memsahib* (1973), and *Begam Barve* (1979), most of them were also directed with Mahesh Elkunchwar and Vijay Tendulkar. He is also famous for screen acting in Marathi and Hindi feature films and seen playing the role as screen actor in film *Ventilator* (2016). In 1994, he was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (Marathi) by Sangeet Natak Akademi, he also received Padmashri award in January 2012.

While studying the Satish Alekar's plays which are rooted in the Marathi language, he also makes use of idiomatic language. *Mahapoor* (1975) which show us the themes like corruption, administration and the misuse of power. The play serves as a motivation to raise responsiveness which encourages the audience to question and encounter the existing power structures. It is an opportunity for the artist to work together and learn more things from each episode and helps them to show their talent or artistic talent before the audience.

Alekar says, "...when writing the play all that I thought was that if the breadwinner of a middle class family died all of sudden, grief could strike at two levels, affecting Nana, the son and Rama his mother in one way, and those outside the family in another way – there would be a heaven and earth difference between the two. The play is an attempt to understand this difference" (Alekar).

Satish Alekar's *Mahanirvan* is a two act play, which tells us the story of a dead man with some realistic scene, performed in a tragic-comic sense. The main protagonist death gives the senselessness of human action which tries to prove the dark side of human life. The title of the play itself offers us *Mahanirvan* (Death) as a theme of the play. The character Bhaurao is of a middle class family, *Mahanirvan* of the Bhauraoi the full funeral episode or Moksha described as *Mahanirvan* exposes the misrepresentation of death.



Play opens on the stage with the death of the Bahurao, the character makes us clear about his death, at some time he is present and sometime unseen for other characters, and all the funeral incineration is performed by neighbour and the portrayal of characters flash back is shown sometimes. In Hindu belief it is said that, soul of the dead cannot leave the earth before funeral burning. Alekar's characters have tried to create real scenes, sounds, set, costumes and lighting through which they tried to explore the ideas, themes and views.

On the stage, Bahurao is very eager to see all the rituals done by his neighbours, but at the same time he is worried for his wife, about her protection from this society. Everyone is busy for the funeral demo on the stage. Their eagerness shows that they are interested in the rituals rather than the death of Bhaurao. The character Bhaurao talks about the societal dogmas and narrates every action on the stage. He is a silent observer on the stage, sometimes he is giving each and every details of play and sometimes remains unseen for other characters. He notices the reactions of the people who hurriedly bring all the required material for funeral; also he observes the action of his family about his sudden death. Throughout the play as a hidden character he gives idea through the dialogues and commenting on the social beliefs. He experiences the nature of each character after his death, his wife is alone sitting in the house and son is out of station for the tournaments. As per the Hindu religion, it is necessary that all the funeral rituals are to be carried out by elder son of the family. Here in the play it is shown how Bhaurao is worried about his wife, he doubts that all other residents might have a lust for Ramma, and they may seduce her. In the first act it is seen that his wife was very happy and kindhearted with him when Bhaurao was alive, but in the second act it is discovered that his wife was not happy with him.

When the funeral procession is going on, Bhaurao wants to meet his wife, it tells desire for life, but it is observed that only ten days after the death of Bhaurao, his wife Ramma desires another handsome friend who were present for Bhaurao's funeral. Bhaurao gets shocked when he comes to know the real nature of his wife Ramma and her desire for other man. On the second hand it is also seen that Bhaurao's desire for other woman i.e for Bandu's mother. Bhaurao expects from his wife to be loyal, but he himself has a desire for Bandu's mother. People says that Bandu may be his illegal son from his physical appearance same as of Bahurao. Bhauro says that people say that Bandu Joshi's face is similar to that of Bhaurao's but he says it is not true; he has only friendly relationship with Bandu's mother.

In the first act he describes about his son Nana, he is the son of Bhaurao and Ramma, he is very proud and talks many childhood memories of Nana. Nana returns home without having sadness for father, instead he asks neighbours to do the rituals fast. When Bhaurao's funeral procession is going on, no one wait for Nana, even when he enters, he does not show any sorrow on his father's death, but completes the rituals which tells absurdity. Bhaurao is also watching the behavior of Nana, who doesn't have any effect of father's sudden death. He expects at least his son will take care of his mother.

After the death of Bhaurao, family responsibility comes towards Nana; he is the son of Bhaurao and Ramma. . In the second act when Nana comes to know that his mother desires someone else, he has doubt may be his father's death is not natural, may be plan of his mother to kill him. Nana is in search of that man for whom his mother desires. In the first act it was shown how Ramma plays a role of very happy and faithful wife but in second act it is clear that she dreams for a handsome man who wears suit and black gogal, whom she saw in her husband's funeral programme. When Bhaurao dies Rama thinks that she is free from the typical husband who did not allow freedom to this wife. Rama thinks that her feelings were suppressed; now she feels free. Bhaurao's death affects Rama, as she has led her life in full of suppression, as most other women in Indian society suffers.



The second act play is narrated by Nana, he describes each and every act, and his style is different than Bhaurao. Bhaurao narrated the first act and eager to see all the rituals. All the characters presented in the *Mahanirvan* are terrible and shocking. A dead person plays a role between life and death. Throughout the play, Alekar shows that how one lives in misunderstanding and also die in misunderstanding without having any details. On this earth human life takes birth which is celebrated with splendid happiness but death is sad moment in which all religious rituals are carried out for the sake of society. *Mahanirvan* where the value of death is decreased by showing it in a comical manner.

When Nana takes the funeral procession in new Smashan, Bhaurao try to escape from the hands of Nana. He denies his funeral procession in new smashan, as his forefather is cerement in the old smashan and due to that condition he has a attachment with them. Satish Alekar gives a comical presentation, he try to present the each situation with traditional techniques, which entertains the audiences.

Alekar gives the portrayal of real life through the characters which is said to be absurdity mostly he wants to reflect the approach of the society. Lastly I would like to conclude that the *Mahanirvan* where death value is decreased and most importance are given to rituals. Through the comical presentation the rituals are most important in Hindu instead of death. Lust or desire of society instead of death or life is seen. Though there is distraction of plot sometimes but many aspects of life is tried to present through this play. Alekar very effectively presents the each situation with the traditional techniques, though it was difficult to put in front of audience, spontaneous performance by the actors reminds the *Mahanirvan*'s visual show. Actually a play is energetic forms of artistic expressions that entertains audience and make them connected till end through the play. It is very difficult task to perform on the stage with the help of traditional techniques and dramatize it with various deviations. *Mahanirvan* by Satish Alekar discovers current themes and societal norms. The play probes into the details of life, death, and the human condition.

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