

Socio –Political Theme in Vijay Tendulkar’s *Encounter in Umbugland*

P.Archanadevi M.A., M.Phil.,

Department of English, Aditanar College of Arts and Science
archanadevi18.1.1997@gmail.com

Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar plays an important role among the 20th century Indian play wrights. He uses political themes in most of his plays. He has won many awards for his plays. He is a prolific writer. He describes socio – political problems in his dramas. *Encounter in Umbugland* is an important play among them. It reveals socio – political theme through the characters childish Princess Vijaya and the five Cabinet Ministers – Vratyasom, Bhagadanta, Karkashirsha, Pishtakeshi and Aranyakedu. There is a political encounter between the queen and the ministers. The words hypocrisy, diplomacy, and treachery are the stepping stones for a politician’s success and development. Politicians very cunningly plan to get power by injuring people. This play illustrates how the cunning politicians win the game of power politics, and how they make fool of people. The present paper illustrates this concept by presenting an innocent childish Princess Vijaya into a cunning politician in Vijay Tendulkar’s play *Encounter in Umbugland*. Tendulkar presents how Vijaya rules a state against the treachery of the five Cabinet Ministers and how an eunuch guides her in the right path in the game of power politics.

Keywords— power politics, Umbugland, hypocrisy, diplomacy, hopscotch.

Encounter in Umbugland reveals that politics is full of hypocrisy and treachery. According to Will Durant, “The political machine triumphs because it is a united minority acting against a divided majority” (35). This play is a political allegory. It was originally written in Marathi as *Dambadwipcha Mukabala*,

which is translated into English. This play depicts the fight for power among politicians. The play starts with the celebration of 60th anniversary of the coronation of King Vichitravirya after the death of the king. There is a political crisis in Ubugland. Ubugland is an island. There are five ministers who have planned to gain power in ruling the island. They have made a resolution of make Princess Vijaya as a queen. She is an innocent child who is weak and feeble. They want to make her a puppet in their hands. Vijaya is very close to her attendant Prannarayan who is a eunuch. He is appointed by the princess as her chief advisor. She learns some tricks of politics from him. He moulds her as a powerful princess. She is not a puppet in the hands of the ministers. She directly interacts with the tribal people in Ubugland. She plans for the rehabilitation of the Kadamba tribe, the original tribe of Ubugland. The Cabinet Ministers are shocked to see her decision making ability. They start to plan against her. Vratyasom chalks out the plan, “ We must gather a mob! We must incite the people! we must loose upon her the tidal wave of an infuriated mob. That’s what’ll rock her? She’s still raw, she’s an inexperienced child We’ll force her to surrender! We’ll make her submit!” (EU 333-334).

The palace is surrounded by a mob. Vijaya comes forward and announces the abolishing of taxation. The crowd shouts the names of the ministers. Vijaya promises to hand over the ministers to them. At last the ministers beg the queen to save them. Queen Vijaya cunningly turns the game of power politics against the ministers. The Cabinet Ministers encourage people to turn against the princess. They besiege the palace. The Cabinet Ministers are happy about the fight between the people and the soldiers. Prannarayan delivers a provoking speech at the end.

On behalf of the kingdom of Ubugland, I wish you all a thousand years of peace, prosperity and plenty. It is you who give life to the encounter. I am not a fighter... You are a force that claps its hands, make strange noises with its mouth, an amazing untiring force. (EU 356)

In this play, King Vichitravirya is a power-thirsty ruler and his five Cabinet Ministers-Viratyasom, Bhagadanta, Karkashirsha, Pishtakeshi and Aranyaketu are diplomatic politicians. There are some similarities between Ubugland and India of seventies. In Sanskrit India is called as 'Jambudwip' and it is used by Tendulkar as 'Dambudwip'. The word Ubugland rhymes with 'humbug'. Princess Vijaya symbolizes Indira Gandhi, the late Prime Minister of India, refers to goddess Lakshmi. In *Indian Drama Today*, Sarat Babu says, "Ubugland intensifies the idea of hypocrisy. Princess Vijaya stands for the Prime Minister of India; Indira Gandhi ... The play draws parallels between the rule of Vijaya and that of Indira." (109)

Vichitravirya is a hypocrite. When the Cabinet Ministers are in twenties they entered politics. They serve the king like slaves for forty years. They want the power on their hand. Because of this purpose they make a child as queen. They expect the child to be innocent. They think that through her they can use the power in favour of them. But things change. Vijaya rules over them. Without consulting the Cabinet Ministers, she takes her own decision with the help of Prannarayan. The play shows that the man who has power has failed due to selfish content. It makes him treacherous, hypocrite and diplomatic. These are the causes for the encounter between Queen Vijaya and the Cabinet Ministers. King Vichitravirya dedicates his sixty years of life for Ubugland people. People learn the lesson of honesty, principle, sincerity from the king.

Encounter in Ubugland shows the picture of political conspiracy. The play shows the political condition of the sixth decade of twentieth century. Tendulkar analyses power politics, social relation, and human value in this play. Beena Agarwal observes, "Tendulkar in the play *Encounter in Ubugland* accepts that all the social problems are the result of rotten conventions and customs that require radical transformation" (133).

In this play the game of power changes an innocent Princess into a strong political leader. At first Princess Vijaya does not have any interest in the luxurious life of the palace. As a child she is interested in

playing youthful games such as hopscotch. Vijaya said, “If I had wings, I would have left them (the palace precincts) ages ago – gone so far, I wouldn’t know how to return!” (EU 271). Under the guidance of Prannarayan, a eunuch, she transforms into an intelligent ruler. She learns how to control the Cabinet Ministers and the furious mob. She plans for the upliftment of the Kadamba tribe. The Cabinet Ministers have a selfish motive behind crowning Princess Vijaya. But she does her best as a princess. At first it was difficult to manage the state for her. Under the teaching of Prannarayan she learns to manage the state and the treacherous politicians.

Tendulkar shows how leaders make their people mindless. Mindless people allow their leaders to be hypocritical. These people cause a big damage to the nation. In the political field nothing is real. It is revealed through this play. There are two political encounters in this play. One is between the ministers and the Kadamba tribe and the other is between Vijaya and her Ministers. The Ministers decide to fight against the queen to regain their power. Among the ministers Bhagadanta is a Kadamba. Through Bhagadanta, the queen plans her counter attack. There is no unity among ministers. Bhagadanta tells everything about the minister’s plan to the queen. Through this incident we come to know about the sagacity of Queen Vijaya. The play is full of powerful political satire. It reveals the fact that success and treachery go hand in hand. The Cabinet Ministers were waiting for the opportunity to exploit the innocent people and also the childish princess in the game of power politics. But Vijaya did not give place for their treachery. There is a drastic change from the beginning to the end towards Vijaya’s behaviour.

Encounter in Umbugland is a powerful satire by Vijay Tendulkar. This play describes how the innocent are exploited by the treacherous ministers and how the wise overcome treachery in the game of power politics. It also exposes how a childish princess learns the tricks in politics and how she becomes a great leader of a state. It also presents the current position of some politicians. In many places people are exploited by the cunning politicians. Many people fall as victims in their hands. They made people a puppet in their hands. It is clearly portrayed in the play *Encounter in Umbugland* by Vijay Tendulkar.

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