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## Critical Study of Chinu Modi's One Act Plays

*Bhasmasur and Kalparivartan*

**Arjun G. Dave**

**Marwadi Education Foundation, Rajkot**



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### *Bhasmasur and Kalparivartan*

Chinu Modi (1939) is experimental and creative dramatist of Gujarat, who has received the modern trends from the western literature and dived deep into the ancient treasure of Indian Literature. Modi is a trendsetter Gujarati playwright. The attitude, mood and taste of Gujarati readers is taken into the consideration by this playwright. He has received great appreciation as a dramatist and poet in Gujarati Literature from readers and critics. He also has remained controversial literary figure because of his rebellious attitude and experimental nature. He has developed his own vision to see the themes with a unique perspective.

Drama is not only literary art but it is also performing art. One Act Play is a modern form of drama which required more keen dramatic abilities. It is one of the most accepted performing arts, which has fascinated dramatists and spectators both. It is having great scope for creativity and social reform. Modi took the opportunity to work on it too. In this paper researcher has focused on his two recent one act plays to study Modi as a One Act Playwright.

#### ***Bhasmasur:***

Chinu Modi's one act play *Bhasmasur* deals with the myth of Bhasmasu who was enchanted and was ultimately burned to death by Vishnu incarnated as enchantress. Chinu Modi modified the



VIDHYAYANA

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tale of Vrukashur who was transformed into *Bhasmasur* and later on how he underwent the change from a might demon to that of the ruined to dust. The author has interwoven the circumstances that occurred as a result of the boon that Vrukashur has and the supernatural elements into the play artistically and dramatically.

As per the tradition of Sanskrit plays, the play begins with the invocation of lord Ganesh and the suggestive dialogues of Vidushak – Nati, a female jester. The play, *Bhasmasur*, develops around the central theme after the protagonist, Vrukashur receives the boon from lord Shiva. The 'Sundari' (enchanted) becomes the weakness of Vrukashur who has become a great source of chaos and terror to all Devas including lord Shiva. This weakness is exploited by Indra-Narad and Vishnu-Lakshmi. Consequently, Vrukashur turns into *Bhasmasur* and *Bhasmasur* turns into 'Bhasma' (ashes). The characters of Kok-Vikok have difference of mindset as they have many contradictions. Kok speaks very little. Vikok on the other hand speaks with great enthusiasm and vigor and his statements represent his restlessness. Their quest of their father stands for the exemplary paternal-love. Author has expressed enough sympathy by showing that the demons too have, rather should have, self-respect, pride and wisdom. Many questions are raised by incarnating Indra-Narad to intensify the struggle. The matter reached to Kailash-Vaikunth consequently. The character of Indra appears to be that of the modern day politician who safeguard himself diplomatically. Narad has to be the victim of the wrath of Vishnu, Shiva or Vrukashur, yet he maintains his divinity. Shiva's composed attitude is worth seeing. Equality also creates troubles sometimes which results into the charity in vain. By the incarnation of Vishnu-Lakshmi it is exemplified that



VIDHYAYANA

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equality, innocence and compassion are great virtues but intelligence is greater necessary virtue.

Their happy married life and manifestation of master-disciple is beautifully and interestingly depicted. The appearance of Kartikay is meteoric. The author has successfully created the characters of Devas-Demons and human beings from the psychological point of view and narrating the complex aspects of their personality.

The dialogues and language of the play are suitable to the dramaturgy. The prose assimilates the storyline. The beginning and end, the benediction and the central theme are following the style of Sanskrit plays. The peculiarity of the author is seen in his creation of the imaginary world and his commendable efforts in transferring the inner and outer world from peaceful to grave and from grave to relieving are worth observing. The boon of the *Bhasmasur* turns out to be the death-cause for him. The title of the play, '*Bhasmasur*' is proved to be appropriate as 'Bhasma' means 'burn down' as well as 'ash'. Thus, the boon of *Bhasmasur* i.e. the ability to burn down whom so ever he wishes merely by placing his hand on one's head, highlights the human limitation and importance of true understanding and true liberation. The author makes efforts to uplift the supreme significance of wisdom.

However, many limitations that occur due to the adaptation are inevitable. Kalama, for instance, utters that Vrukasur is dead. Vishnu then corrects her by suggesting that it was not Vrukasur but *Bhasmasur* was killed. Here, the question arises that was *Bhasmasur* killed or merely his name? Was his character transformed completely? In the dance sequence *Bhasmasur* was to place his hand on his head, following the enchantress, and got burned down. After the narration of his getting



VIDHYAYANA

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burned down, there appears the discretion of his half burned head and his gory body seen by Kok-Vikok. Now 'Bhasma' means 'ash' but still *Bhasmasur* has not turned into ashes. The supernatural elements seem to fail in creating the desired effect. The appearance of Narad before Kok-Vikok is contradictory. How come he appears as an enchantress and then as a sage!

All the elements are incorporated in order to make the play presentable and enactment friendly. 'Fade out' is placed at the change of every scene (on page 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 16, 19, 27 and 30); instruction for the appearance of the characters; 'miracle music stroke' (on page 7, 13, 17, 26, 28, and 29); and on page no, 30 'gong'. It is appropriate to quote Satish Vyas's opinion about the success the play *Bhasmasur*, "'*Bhasmasur*', a one act play, was written as part of competition at Akashavani and has got national prize in it...the audience is the main objective of the write-up and the treatment more reader oriented element of enactment. Nevertheless, when it was translated into Hindi and performed at the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad, the elements of performing art were also visible in the great extent." It has to be observed that with the same title of *Bhasmasur*, Hindi translation has been published by Chinu Modi. Further, this play has been adapted as a radio-play and has been as successful as on the stage. Thus, the play has been proved an equal success at literary parameters and performing arts expectations as well.

### *Kalparivartan*

Chinu Modi has endeavored to tell the tale of time utilizing 'Manvantar' myth of Puranas and the popular legends of the transition of ages. By depicting the cyclical nature of the beginning and end



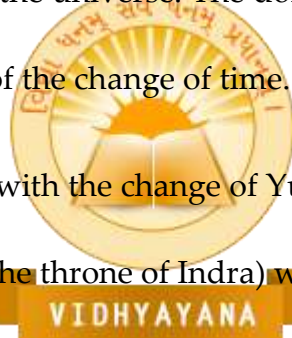
VIDHYAYANA

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of the time, the author dealt with the contradiction of the Yugas i.e. Satyuga, Dvaparyuga, Tretayuga and Kalyuga as well as the elemental closeness among all the Yugas. The author chooses Dvaparyuga for telling the mystery of all three time zones i.e. the past, present and the future and the all three worlds i.e. the heaven, the earth and the hell. The last of Dvaparyuga is 'today' and the first day of day of Kalyuga is 'tomorrow'. According to ancient Indian belief from all three world, all three time zones and all three Yugas, the end of Dvaparyuga, which is the third one, marks the beginning of Kalyuga. Kalyuga is believed to be the worst of all four Yugas. Without the immense force of the time no life can be active or mobile. Each Yuga brings with it the nature enforced on all the life force of the universe. The dominance of respective Yuga is the main subject and the occurrences of events of the change of time.



VIDHYAYANA

According to the popular belief along with the change of Yuga the 'Indra' will also change and the Indrani (wife of Indra) and Indrasan (the throne of Indra) welcome the new Indra! But Shachi does not accept the new Indra! Only if Shachi accepts the new Indra, the usual proceedings of the Yuga can work. As part and parcel of transition the individual love has to sacrifice for the sake of the universe. The tale is given the gravity by this compelled separation, intense emotions, events and characters. Indra-Indrani of Dvaparyuga are portrayed as strong and chest characters who are bound by such love that even Devas feels surprised of their separation. The plight of Indra is inevitable. He gets ready to fight against time, give in to the force of time, compromises for the sake of the universal system and being rule-bound. The confusion, struggle, agony and the affectionate love lead Indrani up to the end. The last meet of Indra-Indrani seems to be the sigh of



VIDHYAYANA

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a painful heart.

Urvashi's expression of the symbolic love story of the past envisages the forthcoming misfortune. There is a sarcastic remark on the celibacy of Narad. The purpose of sainthood is not only to wander with the changes of time but also to determine the direction and to provide a structure to the scattered life events. For this purpose the creation of characters of Narad-Chitragupt, Vishnu-Lakshmi, Shiva-Gauri, are noteworthy. The old shodashi is an interesting character that creates great surprising situation at the transformation. His tale gives specific turn to the play. All the characters apart from that of Sutradhar are unearthly. All these characters are depicted from the psychological point of view and their individual specialties. The author has kept it a mystery over the question that whether or not Shachi accepts the new Indra?



VIDHYAYANA

The flow of the dialogues is complex and ingenious. The rise and fall are based on the events and characters. On the ancient background the author has imbibed the language-dialogue on the novel experiment. The invocation to the lord Ganesh at the beginning of the play justifies the prose style of both, the beginning and the ends. The language seems more embellished because of the use of the Sanskrit diction, idiomatic statements, repetitive sentences, metaphor and other figure of speeches. The author has remained vigilant about the authenticity and the structure. Sometimes this vigilance causes limitation as well. For instance, when Shiva is shown surprised on seeing aged Shachi and other damsels, it's hardly convincing. According to the Indian mythology, lord Shiva is omniscient, he knows everything. He should not be surprised as anything! The similar





VIDHYAYANA

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known-unknowing can be seen in Chitragupt-Naradand other omniscient beings.

As suitable the tradition of Sanskrit plays, the tale is led to its climax by means of prayers, hymns and the instructions of Indra that indicate the central events of the play. The tale is wound up by Sutradhar who sums up the questions asked by Shachi. As the entire flow of the tale is governed by the time, the entire work is struggle-driven. The rejoicing dancing floors at the court are turned into mournful. The change of time tense the situation and this tense situation remains throughout the play.

The enormous time that is approaching cannot be turned back. It cannot be known, touched, narrated, understood, accepted or rejected! However, when the author tries to portray this complex time in words the limitations are bound to happen and yet there are some sparks of creativity are seen as well. The narration appropriate to three time zones and three worlds and justifying the respective Yugas is miraculous. The author has accurately portrayed the mystic nature of destiny against whom even the time appears to be helpless. This helplessness is seen among the inactive Indra, the untimely aged Shachi and other damsels, the manager Chirtagupt and Narad to name a few. This tale of the struggle is timeless. It is ancient and contemporary at the same time.

The author has used 'three' as a recurrent theme in the play. There Yugas – Satya-Treta-Dvapar, three time zones – past-present-future, three narrative style – imaginative-realistic-appropriate, three stands – possession-sacrifice-protest of Indra-Indrani, three couple Indra-Indrani-Shiva-





VIDHYAYANA

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Gauti-Vishnu-Lakshmi. ChinuModi eulogies the dominance of time and destiny by utilizing the elements of mystery, curiosity, miracle and the futility of human wishes and endeavors.

The composition is praiseworthy on visual-auditory-reading capacity and has performed on stage time and again. It has been awarded in many competitions. The brackets are used for character appearance, performance related instructions and stage setting. The national play *Kalparivartan* has been telecast from all the centers of Akashvani. It has been proved a best literary work and has won many critical acclaims. The author has recomposed the tale in his 'Kalakhyan' later on.

#### **Conclusion:**

Thus it has been observed that Modi, a post colonial dramatist has used myth as a major tool to speak of the agonies of today's men. He has set a new trend in Gujarati drama or theater. It is also observed that he has close connection with theatre too. For his dramas he has received positive as well as negative criticism but for him all these are secondary. His most of dramas are staged by the notable directors in Gujarat and India. Bhasmasur and Kalparivartan are the successful one act plays reveals the mastery of Modi on language, narrative techniques, handling of myth and dramatization. Though he has not much big canvas to perform he could justify his characters. He borrowed myths from various ancient Indian resources but gave a unique treatment to them.



VIDHYAYANA

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