

## Depiction of Social Problems in Vizai Bhaskar's "Ruthwik"

**Dr. A. Rama Devi,**

M.A., M.Phil., P.hd, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Engineering English, Koneru Lakshmaiah  
Education Foundation

Ph: 9959303893 [aramadevi@kluniversity.in](mailto:aramadevi@kluniversity.in)

**Sk. Rehena**

Assistant Professor in English, PVP Siddhartha Institute of Technology

Vijayawada. [jarina.2005@gmail.com](mailto:jarina.2005@gmail.com)

### **Abstract:**

Through the centuries, the image and the role of the drama in educating the society has been observed and studied in various ways, and the acquired knowledge has been recorded in literature, works of art, religious texts, mythology and codes of social behaviour. As N. Velamani says in the preface to her book *Drama in Indian Writing in English- Tradition and Modernity* People have always felt that there is a need to have an understanding of the code and conduct of their living in the society within its rational system. In this process they depend on various forms of Literature.

Vizai Bhaskar is the bitter critic of this inhuman social custom. His Plays work as weapons to fight the social injustice of caste ism and advocate for equality in the divided Indian society. Through the plays, he instructs the audience better treatment for the under privileged. His plays seem to spread the message of humanism using the cultural stories as medium of instruction.

**Key Words:** drama, under privileged, conduct, treatment, etc...

Drama is one such meaningful form that has been worshipped and has been perceived as a powerful tool for social change. Neoclassicism was the dominant form of theatre in 18th century. It demanded decorum and rigorous adherence to the classical unities. Neoclassical theatre as well as the time period is characterized by its grandiosity. The costumes and scenery were intricate and elaborate. The acting is characterized by large gestures and melodrama. Neoclassical theatre encompasses the Restoration, Augustan, and Johnstinian Ages. In one

sense, the neo-classical age directly follows the time of the Renaissance. This Theatre encouraged politically satirical comedies.

Culture is an offshoot of a society which in turn affects and reframes the mother society. It is developed out of various influences and out of fantastic ideas of the people that include, besides others, myths, legends, folklore and, sometimes, its history. These are the fictional narratives which many believe to be based on fact. They are actually product of the people's fantasy, their religious beliefs and social gossips. Mostly, these tales are considered as unscientific, superstitious and ritualistic by the modern scientific world.

However, they are 2 deeply rooted in cultures and can be interpreted in relation to the social predicaments of the corresponding time. Majority of the Indian English Playwrights have deftly used these cultural tales as their themes to bring to light the individual and social concerns of their countrymen in contemporary times. That way, such tales of the people acted as a mirror of their society for the playwrights. Through this mirror, they have reflected the individual and social problems of the common man and suggested solutions. *Social Concern in the select plays of Vizai Bhaskar: a Study* presents the reformist attitude as inculcated by the Playwright through his plays.

Greed of modern man is another theme that is found in Vizai Bhaskar's plays. He offers a continual flow of analysis and criticism of an age which he thinks is heading for disaster. He analyses modern man's sense of direction less ness and indicates that he must re-evaluate his aims and goals, his morality and economics, and discard worn out values which no longer describe either human nature of contemporary problems. The play *Ruthwik* introduces this theme that modern men must overcome their limited frames of reference and must cultivate open-mindedness in their search for meaning and direction in a complex world.

Vizai Bhaskar handles different themes and subject matters in his plays which are both topical as well as appealing. His plays establish his reputation as a playwright in Telugu literature and launch him on his celebrated career in the Indian theatre. Most of his plays are translated into English and many Indian languages and have continued to be performed all over country. Vizai Bhaskar wants to highlight the issues of the contemporary society, widely varied in thematic and stylistic content. The following are some dominant themes found in the plays of Vizai Bhaskar. Ruthwik, the central character in the play is very interesting. His description in the beginning of the drama is very realistic and philosophical. Ruthwik is a preacher who

appeals the audience to ponder over the truthful insights of human life. Ruthwik is immeasurably obsessed by the power of truthful living and he judges everything in terms of truth and peace. Being witness to the life of Manmadharao and his family leading, he urges to look into the value of virtuousness in human life. He gives vent to his mind that a man who habituates the virtue of goodness like the vice he practices need not worry much. He can live harmoniously with all the knowledge he requires. He can also give way to the world dreamt by 'Tagore in Geethaanjali'. Vizai Bhaskar portrays Ruthwik as an engaging character from the very beginning to the end as R.K. Narayan's creation of an ambitious financial expert Margayya, a special contribution to Indian English.

Vizai Bhaskar's play *Ruthwik* deals with ailments that are so common in the life of the modern man who suffers from the desire of power; money etc., It sermonizes the people to live harmoniously by protecting *dharma* which in turn protects human life. The dawn of new tendencies and vogues affecting the very truthful way of human life is the crux of the story. By making 'spiritual anchor' *Ruthwik* a character in the play, Bhaskar dexterously demonstrates *dharma's* co presence in the contemporary Indian home, street and office which marks the *adharmas* co-existence of their lives.

Ruthwik, the central character in the play is very interesting. His description in the beginning of the drama is very realistic and philosophical. Ruthwik is a preacher who appeals the audience to ponder over the truthful insights of human life. Ruthwik is immeasurably obsessed by the power of truthful living and he judges everything in terms of truth and peace. Being witness to the life of Manmadharao and his family leading, he urges to look into the value of virtuousness in human life. He gives vent to his mind that a man who habituates the virtue of goodness like the vice he practices need not worry much. He can live harmoniously with all the knowledge he requires. He can also give way to the world dreamt by 'Tagore in Geethaanjali'. Vizai Bhaskar portrays Ruthwik as an engaging character from the very beginning to the end as R.K. Narayan's creation of an ambitious financial expert Margayya, a special contribution to Indian English.

In the play *Ruthwik* while the Ruthwik character elucidates the philosophy of life with interesting anecdotes in between the scenes of the play by following the 'Alienation Theory of Brecht, Manmadharao's character is an embodiment of corruption, bribery and unlawful earning in the main play. By the time he realizes that his wife and son follow his abhorable

conduct and repents for the unpardonable mistakes committed by him, the deity of death knocks at his door. While the characters of his brother-in-law 'Abbulu' and Lawyer represent opportunism and greed for money, his wife Manikyam is equally an avaricious character though a house wife. Therefore, even in this play, Vizai Bhaskar relies on characters which commonly appear in the society. Exceptionality is his experiment through the character 'Ruthwik', which obviously ventilates his own wonderful school of thought.

While appreciating Vizai's wizardry as a playwright, Dr. P.V. Ramana1, in his foreword comments on the play superficially a message oriented, creative, entertaining and very real account of an attack on present day societal ills and mistrust.

*Ruthwik* which is structured into two scenes presents the liberal and modern family with their modern tendencies of greed towards money. There is an anxiety over the desire of spending money among the members of a middle class family of Manmadharao. He has a weakness for which he hypocritically lives. His vagabond son Sekhar who is an embodiment of all modern ills has no care on familial relationships. It is found in one of his utterances.....

*"If it is not this father, I would have born to some other Father! It may be a Royal family! Who knows? Leave it!"* (Ruthwik, P38)

Manikyam, wife of Manmadharao is more selfish and tries to be more practical. In the beginning of the play she looks a faithful wife but later when monetary issues rise, she grows to be more rigid and immoral as it is said in her own dialogue....

*"May God forbid! If something odd happens to you tomorrow due to my misfortune, will anybody around me come to my rescue and allow me to enjoy the property? How am I to survive? On whom shall I depend in my last days, except my daughter? And, if I am to seek my daughter's shelter, I must be good to her! Isn't it? If I allow her building to be disposed of now, will she be kind to me tomorrow?"* (Ruthwik, P48)

Abbulu, brother of Manikyam, is a great opportunist who lives under the grace of his brother-in-law Manmada Rao. He always takes the opportunity to exploit the conditions and shares the money with Lawyer Rama Murthy. His opportunist quality is found as the following.....

*"No more sharing hereafter Mr. Ramamurthy! Management comes into my hands! Brother-in-law will not recover from bed in near future! So, no need for manipulation and no scope for your share!"* (Ruthwik, P22)

He also announces that the human race is now suffering from a great disease of feeling jealous of others; in turn they are creating problems to others. Hence he demands us to be sportive in living the life to its brim by having ecstasy and tranquility. He says that the Home must be a place for practicing peace but not the battle field. When Manmada Rao collapses having strife with his wife, Ruthwik rightly defines home as.....

*“H O M E means not a hotel to satiate your hunger or a Guest-house to quench your lust! It is an alma mater which imparts your duties! A pious Cottage which prepares you to perform the Matrimonial Yagna! It is a Meditation Hall which stimulates your inner Spirit! It’s a Temple of Wisdom which makes room for introspection! It’s a Mother’s lap which cajoles you to the ecstasy! The Sanctum Sanctorum which blesses you with Salvation!”*

(Ruthwik, P20)

Ruthwik also criticizes modern man by saying he would get ready to practice any amount of cruelty for the sake of his well-being. He doesn’t struggle for healthy society and for his fellow human beings. Being he is a sheer anchor of spreading spirituality, Ruthwik pungently attacks the modernity by saying....

*“In one’s own Life, when fear-complex captivates, any amount of cruelty looks logical for him!”* (Ruthwik, P41)

He also asserts the evil plans of modern man as.....

*“For a good project, there may be only one path! But, for executing an ugly plan, there are hundred and thousand ways!”* (Ruthwik, P42)

### **A Global Family-the Concept of Vasudhaika Kutumbam**

Ruthwik highlights Global Family conditions by sermonizing the onlookers of the drama. The scientific study of Ecology describes the interconnectedness, the interrelatedness and the interdependence of living creatures in a given environment. A study of Ecosystems deals with the concepts of Mineral Sharing, Energy Flow and Population Control.

Living organisms belong to social communities. The understanding of ecological principles would help us to come together as one large global community and it would enable us to treat life with a sense of respect and appreciate the intrinsic beauty and value of all living creatures. Similarly Vizai’s play *Ruthwik* also strives to see the whole world should be like a family by

helping each other to aspire for Universal Peace. It appeals the truth lovers rhetorically to know the reason behind unrest among all the Nations today. On one hand the play is demanding all of us to get united as we have to practice the concept of Vasudhaika Kutumbam.

Translation work in the plays of Vizai Bhaskar is over-emphatic in presenting an unmitigated love towards down trodden and his recurrent theme is poor should grow overnight. Vizai Bhaskar's plays deal with human personality trapped within the periphery of a mundane existence. Vizai Bhaskar's answer to the pain of downtrodden is the identification of himself with something beyond the narrow limit of his self-centredness, though momentary.

S. John Peter Joseph, in the article *Aspects of Indian English Drama*, questions the authenticity of spoken English in Indian theatres, feels that Indian English drama is no more than an area of translated texts, lacking the vigour of action<sup>9</sup> (8). Unless the audience is English-knowing and matured, a drama in English is unlikely to elicit a proper response. Of course, the playwrights have taken up contemporary issues in the social and political arenas such as corruption, evils of the caste system, widow marriage, and psychological conflicts. But the point is that some of their dramas lack stage ability, despite their using innovative techniques. But Vizai Bhaskar plays that are translated into English and several other languages are more successful on stage in carrying their sublime theme. Most of his plays are English translations of the original works written in Telugu. The question arises whether they can be truly called Indian English dramas. Maybe, one should differentiate between Indian plays and Indian plays translated into English. Translation, says T.S. Chandra Mouli, is “integral to Indian psyche,” arguing that our epics have been translated into all Indian languages. Translating “culture and literature from one speech system into another has been an integral quality of the Indian mind and India has the ability to absorb,” <sup>10</sup> (7) contends Mouli.

The following preachings of *Ruthwik* are amply relevant to prove the literary spirit of Vizai Bhaskar and his philosophical school of thought beyond one's own imagination— ‘Just like the multiple diseases dominate the body when it loses its element of immunity, certain evil qualities in Man get developed from his very childhood in consonance with the environments and circumstances and when there is conspicuous omission in the way in which he is brought up.’ As a matter of fact, in all the Plays of Vizai Bhaskar, at some place or the other, we find social, orthodoxal, philosophical or emotional literary content that is effectively 120 translated beyond imagination, in consonance with the theme of the Play, and such literature acts as an

arrow to dispel the evils in the society, the superstitious dogmas, the blind beliefs, and the pessimistic views in the society. The dialogues rendered by Raja Ramdas in *Kaalakootam*, Sriramachandramurthy and Madhava Rao in *A Little Luxury*, Yasho and Masto in *Hiranyagarbha*, the god's role in *Jeevannatakam*, the Diety of Death and the reformed minister in *The Minister*, contain highest literary values beyond the boundaries set up by any sane person.

## References

- 1.N. Velmani, Drama in Indian Writing in English - Tradition and Modernity, Language in India, [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com), ISSN 1930-2940 13:6 June 2013,4.
2. John McGrath, A Good Night Out, Popular Theatre: Audience, Class, Form, London: Nick Hern Books, 1991 ISBN 1-85459-370-6 The Bone Won't Break: On Theatre and Hope in Hard Times London: Methuen, 1990, ISBN 0-413-63260-1. Found in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political\\_theatre#cite\\_note-McGrath-8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_theatre#cite_note-McGrath-8), 3.
3. Stephen B.Oates, Let The Trumpet Sound. Found in <http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/mlk3.html>, 20.
4. Campbell J, Power of Myth, Markaz Publications, Tehran, 2002
5. Brockett, Oscar G. & Franklin J. Hildy, History of the Theatre, Ninth edition, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003.
6. Pelling, Christopher, Tragedy, Rhetoric, and Performance Culture, In Gregory 2005, 83-102 Adya Rangacharya Classical Indian Drama and Modern Indian Theatre, Indian Drama, ed. H. H. Annaiah Gowda. 41.
7. Janko, Richard, trans. Poetics with Tractatus Coislinianus, Reconstruction of Poetics II and the Fragments, of the On Poets: By Aristotle. Cambridge: Hackett, 1987
8. Beacham, Richard C, The Roman Theatre and its Audience. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1996
9. Brockett, Oscar G. & Franklin J. Hildy, History of the Theatre, Ninth edition, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003, 77.
10. McCutchan, J. Wilson, Justice and Equity in the English Morality Play, Journal of the History of Ideas, 19.3, 1958, 406.
11. G. K. Hunter, English Drama 1586–1642: The Age of Shakespeare, Clarendon, 1997. 64

*Research paper*

© 2012 IJFANS. All Rights Reserved, **UGC CARE Listed (Group -I) Journal Volume 8, Issue 4, 2019**

12. Dominik, Mark, Shakespeare–Middleton Collaborations, Beaverton, OR: Alioth Press, 1988.
13. Hypercritica, Renaissance Literary Theory. Available at: [http://www.unizar.es/departamentos/filologia\\_inglesa/garciala/hypercritica/03.Renaissance/Renaissance.3.6.html](http://www.unizar.es/departamentos/filologia_inglesa/garciala/hypercritica/03.Renaissance/Renaissance.3.6.html) (accessed on 26th May, 2014)
14. JSTOR, Spanish Golden Age Theatre, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/30228091.pdf?acceptTC=true> (accessed on 27th May, 2014)
15. Gurr, Andrew, The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642, Third ed. Cambridge: