

Use of Brechtian Techniques in *Charandas Chor*

Charandas Chor (1974-1975) is one of the most popular as well as critically acclaimed plays of Habib Tanvir. The play deals with issues related to state, religion and society. He, through this play exposes the hypocrisy and untruthfulness of people involved in these institutes. It is based on a Rajasthani folktale. In 1974, Tanvir heard this Rajasthani folk tale from Vijaydan Detha. By this time this story was not yet written into its Hindi version titled *Uljhan*. It is a two act play. The first act demonstrates time before Charandas took his vows and second act portrays time after.

Detha was unhappy with Tanvir for two reasons, first for not giving him royalty and for changing the end of the story. According to Detha's version Queen epitomized corruption and oppression. Her marriage to guru symbolized continuation of corruption, hypocrisy and oppression, "His chor gets killed, but that's not the end. The queen takes the guru as her consort, because in the story as written by Detha, in order to save face she proposes to the guru and the guru, who is very worldly, becomes her consort" (Katyal 66). On the other hand Tanvir provided anti-climax to his audience and portrayed Queen as more humane. In the end, a group of *satnamis* comes and places a white flag near the head of dead body of Charandas and this way he is turned into a hero. This serves as anti-climax to 'shocking' death of Charandas. When Charandas refuses to marry the queen, she lies at his feet and begs to never reveal to anyone what had just passed between them. He refuses to comply to this request as he had vowed to never lie and therefore she is left with no option but to completely do away with him if she wants to save her image. Hence to some levels she was forced to give order of death of Charandas. Regarding issue of royalty Tanvir politely gave check of ten thousand rupees to Detha which was accepted by him.

Tanvir gave definite instructions for the stage settings. It was to rectangular in shape (About six feet deep, twelve feet wide and nine inches high). Towards left side of the stage, at the back there would be a tree. Also there would be an orchestra group of panthi dancers and singers on the stage. The stage setting was very simple and minimalistic in the play. More bare space allowed more movement by actors. Katyal explains:

The open space suits the folk actor, with his dexterity and physical agility, and allows for the introduction of choreographed group of actors rather than through any re-ordering of the set or stage design. Props are kept to bare minimum, just those items that are actually used as part of the action-sacks of grain, the thief's bundle, the idol in the temple. (68)

Javed Mullik points out that there has been an inversion of hierarchy in the play, "There is a reversal of hierarchy, particularly on moral and ethical levels. Truthfulness, honesty, integrity, ethical rules and even professional efficiency are shown to belong exclusively to a thief, learning the upper echelons of society devoid precisely of these values and virtues" (Mullik 2).

As the title suggests, Charandas is the protagonist of the play. He is shown to be "clever and quick-witted, a true folk hero in the tradition of the subaltern trickster figure who outwits his social superiors" (Katyal 72). The turning point in his life comes when his Guru asks him to never steal again. Unable to comprehend this demand he asks his guru to accept four other pledges from him instead of one. The four promises made by Charandas were "that he will never lead a procession on elephant back, that he will never eat off a golden platter, that he will never marry a queen and that he will never accept the throne of a kingdom" (Katyal 64). Refusing to get caught in his trickery, his guru asks a fifth pledge from him which is that he would never lie. When Charandas made these vows he was

certain that he would never come across such circumstances in his life which would test his self- proposed four vows. But as the play proceeds he finds himself faced with same situations which he had renounced voluntarily.

This play underwent many improvisations before being crystalized in 1975. When Tanvir first performed this play in Khayal form he realized that this form was unsuitable for this play as it emphasized more on singing than acting. During Bhilai workshop he staged six shows of Thakur Pritipal Singh of approximately forty five minutes each. The last days of workshop coincided with a Satnami occasion. The satnam religion was started by guru Ghasidas who at one time was a dacoit. People from untouchable caste adopted this religion which emphasized the importance of truth. The followers of satnam religion are still forced to live outside village boundaries. There is separate well for them and they carry a stick with them for their protection. About Satnami group Tanvir said:

There are lakhs of Satnamis in this country and they've had a quite a history from Aurangzeb's time, quite militant. Every year they gather in Guru Ghasidas's place near Raipur, thousands, a great mela. They sing and dance. Like most untouchables they are given a separate muhalla or area, not in the village. In that muhalla they're given a chauraha (crossroads), a chowk. In that chowk they have a white flag, the Satnami flag, which is kept on a pedestal. (Katyal 65)

Satnami group governs on the ideology, "Truth is god, god is truth" (*satya hi ishwar hai, ishwar satya*). Since the theme was central both in play *Charandas Chor* and governing ideology of *Satnamis*, Tanvir decided to perform *Charandas Chor* for them though it was still in its raw form. At that time it was called *Chor Chor* and its time span was of about forty minutes. The play received enthusiastic response and this inspired him

to develop this play further. Some of *Satnami* influence seen in the play is incorporation of *panthi* dance and songs. *Amardas* was settled to be the title of the play in beginning but “Amardas happened to be one of the gurus of the *Satnamis*, and they protested at it being named after their guru. He tried another name but that also turned out to be a guru. Finally, Charandas was decided upon, and *Charandas the chor* remained” (Katyal 65).

When Shyam Benegal saw the rehearsals of the play while making documentary on Naya Theatre, he decided to make a movie based on this play. Since this movie was to be produced for Children’s Film Society a happy ending was demanded, to make it suitable for children’s viewership. Tanvir wrote screenplay for the movie. To give it a happy ending, Tanvir wrote a scene in which after his death Charandas entered heaven where he tore away the page on which his name was written from the register Chitragupta maintains of dead people. When he looked at Charandas with suspicious eyes, Charandas put crumpled paper in his mouth and swallowed it. When Yama himself came down to probe the matter Charandas stole his buffalo and escaped from his death. The movie ends with the scene of evening in backdrop and police havaldar chasing Charandas Chor. A new character of dishonest thief was inserted played by Madan Lal to enhance the goodness of Charandas played by Lalu Ram in the movie. The film was ready before the play was finalized.

The play underwent many changes. From the play he removed the character of dishonest thief. On advice of others when Tanvir tried introducing a foil to Charandas Chor in the play, he found that he was deviating from his ‘form’ of theatre, “I don’t need a foil, an actor can come on stage and simply declare that I’m a thief, my name is Charandas, that’s good enough for the stage. So I cut the foil out” (Katyal 66).

The other change he made was that he pulled off the scene of afterlife. Many of his peers along with his wife were against this decision yet he went ahead with it during show in Kamani (Delhi). In this show he however had used painted curtains to indicate different settings of play like village square, temple, queen's bedroom etc. These curtains were changed when chorus members came forward to sing and background was put to darkness. Later he did away with this also and action took place at different locations on stage. The characters, action and props in themselves revealed the setting of the play. This is yet another Brechtian technique. He was awarded with success as audiences appreciated this change. After performing four shows in Kamani, twelve shows were shown at Triveni followed by shows in Haryana.

Once the word got around about the popularity of play, Tanvir was invited by Ashok Sen, famous writer from Calcutta, to perform this play in Calcutta. Even Sombhu Mitra, famous Bengali director, actor and playwright came to watch this play. In this performance Govind Nirmalkar played the role of Charandas in this performance and later Deepak Trivedi enacted role of Charandas in other shows. Before Govind, Madan Lal enacted the role of Charandas. Later Ashok Mitra, Indian Marxist economist and politician invited Tanvir to perform his four plays, *Mitti ki gadi*, *Lala Shohrat Roi*, *Gaon Ka Naon Sasural*, *Mor Naon Damad* and *Charandas Chor*. Satyajit Ray, famous Bengali filmmaker came to watch these performances and liked all four of them. Nandikar invited him to stage the play *Charandas Chor* for the annual festival at his Fine Arts Academy Theatre. He was so impressed by the play that every year he invited Tanvir to come and stage a new play for festival but requested him to stage *Charandas Chor* also.

The death of Charandas continues to make audience uncomfortable and for that reason Tanvir believes the reason behind success of the play is death of charandas.

According to Tanvir it is hard to put this play in a definite category of either comedy or tragedy.

Tanvir chose Chhattisgarhi actors and Nacha form of Chhattisgarh to perform this play. About the role of Chhattisgarhi actors Tanvir said:

The actor's contribution in shaping the production was rich. It was mainly through improvisations. A scene like 'Guru Dakshina', one of the temple scenes, is almost entirely based on improvisation. Improvisation has become quite my style of direction now. Not everything comes from the director, or from the actor, but a lot of it comes from this process of improvisation, interpretation of different imaginations and consciousnesses. In the process there is a lot of muck, a lot of repetitiveness, but also lots of gems. You clutch on to the gems and cut out the rest. Then I rush to my desk to write it all down. But some scenes are written down in bold outline from the start. (Katyal 70)

Nacha is a Chhattisgarhi form of secular drama. The performance begins at nine o'clock and continues all night through. Three or four skits are also presented in between. The actors are usually peasants. About nacha actors Tanvir said in his interview to Sudhir Solankar titled *Can folk theatre speak to the city?*, "They are of course good analysts, not very articulate about what they are doing, but they are past masters at satirising things" (32). He gives example of popular nacha plays like *Sadhu nakal* (hypocrisy of sadhu is the theme) and *Jamadarin* (Jamadarin touches feet of a deity without causing fury in audience) to prove his point.

In reference to the use of folk form Bandopadhyay commented:

the directors interacting with the traditional and/ or folk theatres sought to go to the core of these forms, to catch their rhythms or motivating energies, gestural idioms, occasionally formal conventions or devices, and use them to convey a modern sensibility at work. (Bandopadhyay 427)

Tanvir by using nacha actors, nacha form, songs and dance have aptly used folk form to express problem of corruption and hypocrisy in modern world.

A lot of scenes were developed through repeated improvisations but some scenes remained the way they were initially decided by Tanvir. Scenes that took place in queen's place were that included in this 'bold outline' and remain the way they were planned at inception of the play. Another thing of significance in the play is that of incorporation of rituals,

The play opens with a ritual dance by a traditional panthi troupe belonging to the Satnami sect; and it ends with the solemn deification ceremony at the end, complete with a lighted lamp, the breaking of a coconut and the showering of flower petals, as the Satnamis file past their white flag, singing their anthem of Truth. A third point for a ritual is the scene in the temple, halfway through the play, when a hymn is sung on stage, a traditional devotional song based on the Ramayana. (Katyal 70-71)

The songs sung in the play were written by the folk poets Ganga Ram Sakhet and Swaran Kumar Sahu having Chhattisarhi tunes. The songs in the play articulates and comments on the significance of events in the play. Also

Apart from this, the live music and singing add an aural texture to the performance just as the rituals add a visual richness, enhancing the overall dramatic and theatrical experience; they underline the inclusion of an oral

tradition that is increasingly marginalized in contemporary performance.

(Katyul 71-72)

Presence of music is one prominent element seen in all his plays. He elaborates on importance of music,

It is difficult to conceive of our folk theatre without music and song. The basis of our classical theatre is also music and it was through this that Bharat Muni composed his grammar of performing arts called the *Natya Shastra*. Music is the sine qua non of our cultural expression, and not just music, dance too is an important component. Bharat Muni had conceived something like the 'total theatre', one in which *natya*, *nritya* and *sangeet* were all equally important. (Tanvir 142)

The playwrights who were members of IPTA like Tanvir were attracted to Brecht because it provided the "most apt means of communication, so that theatre could be taken to the people-a prime example is Habib Tanvir." (Dalmia 184) Tanvir rejected the techniques of realism and naturalism. He neither tried to make his plays logically appealing nor made his characters into complex psychological beings. Realism focused on 'reproduction of reality' while naturalism emphasized that nature of characters is shaped by hereditary factors and environment.

The difference between Brecht and Tanvir was in targeted audience. Tanvir tried to reach masses through his play while "Brecht was a highly elite writer. He was not a proletarian writer who wrote for the masses. In the whole design of his plays, when you think of it, he was addressing intellectuals" (Dalmia 189).

According to Girish Karnad, Brecht, "What he did was to sensitize us to the potentials of non-naturalistic techniques available in our own theatre." (Bodden 104)

Regarding Brecht's teachings Tanvir said:

And then I went abroad and saw Brecht and so many other theatres and came to realize that imitation doesn't take us anywhere and what the villagers do by way of simplicity of staging, the imaginative use of space, [with] regard to make-believe and the manner in which they deal with time, haunted me. (Tanvir 343)

Learning about Brecht made him realize about importance of folk and classical theatre of India and he therefore avoided any kind of imitation of western drama. He adopted techniques of Brecht because Brecht's theatre was similar to that of folk theatre of India,

I find him very contemporary, full of humour,...poetry, and meaning. So it was natural to take Brecht, especially because he's so open in his form, he's imbibed so much from the East, Eastern techniques, that for any Eastern man to take to Brecht to try out his own Eastern techniques is a natural thing. (Dalmia 255)

The use of songs in the play is in Brechtian style. The first song in the play is sung in praise of truth and guru. It says that nothing is better than truth and no one is greater than a guru. A guru is someone who joins one with the 'divine' truth. Since divine truth lies at higher level of consciousness, only a guru can reach at such heights and bring it to masses. It also conveys that the true leaders are the gurus and the truth is most precious thing because only few possess it. Later we come across a song which satirizes guru,

Is it salvation you want? Just

Give the guru his due

All learning is a sham till you

Give the guru his due

Nothing will work for you till you

Give the guru his due (1.1)

The song in the end of the play serves as the anticlimax. It prepares audience for the impending tragic end of Charandas. Another purpose which it serves is in the process of deification, wherein he is transformed into the status of god, “As the solemn ritual of deification takes place on stage, we see how a common man can become a legend, a saint or a folk hero, immortalised in song and myth; we see him take root in the hearts of the people” (Katyal 67).

The techniques inspired by Brechtian theatre which Tanvir used were ‘bare stage’, ‘the spare use of props’ and ‘the disinterest in working out the finer psychological details of character and plot’ (Dalmia 263). These techniques are commonly practiced in folk theatres also. The other technique was use of song to make social and political comment.

In his co-opting folk theatre he was not hesitant to make the required changes because “Tanvir was not interested in preserving any given traditional form intact; he did not insist on purity, on the ‘authenticity’, of any specific folk form” (Dalmia 255). Dalmia defends Tanvir against the accusation of using false form of folk when she wrote,

The possibility of striking a false ‘folksy’ note could thus be ruled out, since the play eventually reflected the player’s reception of Tanvir’s story ideas. [This was so because dialogues were improvised by actors] If Tanvir was responsible for the final assemblage, the composition of the play was collective. (Dalmia 256)

Regarding Brechtian technique, in the first scene of first act itself the fourth wall convention is broken when Havaldar asks for name of thief and Charandas says he can’t

tell him in front of all the people gathered here and takes him in the corner of stage. The fourth wall is a theatre practice according to which actors perform oblivious to the presence of audience, confining role of actors strictly as performers and role of audience strictly as spectators. Therefore fourth wall is an imaginary wall which maintains separation of performers and audience. Any direct interaction between the two leads to breaking of fourth wall convention.

Tanvir mocks how in modern times rank has become synonymous with moral values of a person and how it can be misleading. Havaladar introduces himself as Mister Babu Das, havaladar of the old cadre, calling forth respect for himself while calling Charandas names such as fool, swine, scoundrel, rogue, bastard etc. Charandas presents himself as washerman to havaladar when caught by him and hides stolen golden plate in bundle of clothes. Believing that washerman might know the name of thief, havaladar gives excuse of his 'noble' profession to summon trust when demanding name of thief from Charandas before giving prize which he intends to keep with himself:

CHARANDAS. Give me the reward

HAVALDAR. Tell me first!

CHARANDAS. First the reward.

HAVALDAR. You don't trust even a high-ranking officer like me, do you, you suspicious lowborn bastard? Here take two rupees. I'll give you more later.

Come now, out with it. (1. 1. 58-63)

Charandas then tells him it was the thief who stole. Havaladar asks for name and Charandas says, "He who steals, maharaj, is only called –thief. He has no other name."

(1.1)

The language is as close to as what people commonly use. It is crude and witty. Interaction between a peasant and Charandas reveals so:

PEASANT. Oh ho! Gobble me up raw, will you? I'll gobble you up, you damned hijra!

CHARANDAS. Come here yaar. (Affecting an effeminate manner) May I ask you something, my friend?

PEASANT. Ask away

CHARANDAS. Tell me, how did you guess? (The peasant laughs.) Shut up! Do I look like a hijra, you son of a bitch? (1.1)

In scene 1 we see interaction of Charandas with havaldar and two events where he steals. First he steals from a peasant. By use of threats and intimidation he steals from the peasant. On finding that the bundle which he stole from peasant contained only sattu, he called peasant back and shared sattu with him. When peasant hesitated Charandas forced him to seat which made peasant fall and there was clink of coins which were tied to the waistband of his loincloth. Charandas took coins from peasant and scared him away.

Then he saw a merchant's wife passing by him, bedecked with ornaments. Seeing her he started crying. On being asked why he was crying he told her he had bad news for her. He first told her that he was from the same village as her, Bhatgaon. She corrects him and tells him she is from Nandgaon. He tells her that he too is from Nandgaon and that bad news concerned Chhotey Babu who was very ill and was asking for his didi. To this she replies that he had no elder sister and that she was her bhabhi. Charandas again acts as if he got things muddled. Charandas asks her to come with him as Chotey Babu was about to die any time. Soon when they start walking Charandas exclaims, acting as if he remembered something and he told her a made up story of a recent robbery which took at same place

which they were passing through. He showed his own bundle of clothes lying there and told her it belonged to the man who was recently robbed and killed at same place. He then asks her to remove her ornaments and collect in the gamchha as a precaution. When he asks her to hand over gamchha to him by giving her the excuse that he was a man and therefore could safeguard ornaments better, the woman sees through the ploy of Charandas. Unable to threaten her with violence as she was woman he takes thrashes and abuses from her. At the end of scene Havaladar enters and Charandas starts polishing his shoes. When Havaladar looks down at his shoes, Charandas stealthily escapes.

In scene two, guru enters and the scene is staged in village square. The devotees sing song of praise of guru. They sing that the guru roams alone through forest. The householder stays in the home, a tramp roams the road and a guru roams in forest alone. The guru sits on the platform of village square and devotees come one by one to touch his feet. After taking blessing the devotees again join to sing. They sing that one can have anything one want only after giving guru 'his due'. This scene is criticizing the religious practices which demands money from the followers. This is yet another Brechtian technique wherein songs are used to pass an objective and distanced comment on a situation or character. A smoker, gambler and drunkard become devotees of guru and promise to give up their vices though we see they don't hold on to their promise for long. We also see guru being primarily concerned with his guru dakshina, most clearly in his interaction with drunkard.

GURU. Look, beta, nothing happens without guru dakshina. It's a must.

SMOKER. But I don't have any money, gurudev.

GURU (begs). Beta, if nothing else, at least fork out a few coins for a cup of tea.

SMOKER. Not a coin, guru-ji. Take it tomorrow.

GURU. Credit! All of you want credit! You tell me-how do I manage?

SMOKER. You tell me, guru-ji, how do I manage, without any money?

GURU (threatening him with his chimta). And you say you have no vices!

(As the smoker ducks, the guru notices a chillum tucked into his turban.)

What's this-a chillum! God is great! What disciples he blesses me with- a gambler, a drunkard, and a ganja addict! Praise be to God! Beta, since you don't have any money, let this chillum be your guru dakshina.

SMOKER. Gurudev, I gave up bidis because you asked me to, but I can't give up my ganja smoking (tries to snatch it back).

GURU. Arrey, arrey, arrey, beta, this belongs to the guru now! You can't just take back your dakshina, it's not done. Jai bholenath! Come, I'll give you mantra (breathes the mantra in his ear). (1.1)

To escape Havaldar, Charandas prostrates at the feet of guru in order to hide. Here guru knows Charandas is a thief yet he helps him to hide. When Havaldar leaves, Charandas asks guru to take him as his disciple. On being asked what does he do, Charandas answers he feels ashamed to tell guru that he is a thief. Guru poses a pre-condition in front of Charandas which is to give up stealing in order to become his disciple. On Charandas's failure to promise this, Guru says:

Arrey, do you mean to say everyone in this world lives by thievery? Get a job. Live honestly. Earn some respect. Is robbery the only way to make a living? Come on, speak up. You want me to be your guru, don't you? Then make a vow. Not a thousand vows-just one. Just give up one thing. (1. 2)

These words of guru prove to be somewhat ironical because guru himself robs people by making false promise of providing solution to their problems, *munim* stoops down to steal meager five golden coins, havaladar takes bribe and queen steals life of charandas to save her image.

Charandas for his vow promises to renounce four things, that he will never eat off a golden plate, will never mount an elephant to lead a procession, will never marry a queen and will never accept a throne if offered to him. These became his four vows. Thinking that stealing can't be done without lying, guru asks charandas to take another vow that he will never lie. To never lie became charandas' fifth vow. When he takes the fifth vow guru gives him boon of long life, "Well done! Bless you, my son. May you live long. (Gives him the mantra) Now, beta, let's come to brass tacks. What are you thinking of for your guru?" (1.2). Ironically it is this vow, to never lie which cuts short the life of charandas.

After taking his fifth vow he tells guru the truth that guru is no different from him, "Well, I steal at night, in the dark, stealthily, entering homes through holes in the wall- while you sit here in broad daylight, openly, with a crowd of people around you. And you make much more than I do" (1.2). Here Tanvir criticizes the turning of religious institutes into profit garnering system by people like guru. The scene two of act one ends with arrival of havaladar and dispersal of gathering. Guru and Charandas escapes with the help of chaos caused due to dispersal of gathered mass of devotees.

Scene three of act one takes place at verandah of landlord. In this scene, peasant and Charandas come face to face again. Seeing peasant crying he inquires the reason behind peasant's distress. Peasant tells him about terrible famine in the village and starving children. He then asks peasant to go to landlord and ask for some rice and in the meantime waits at the door observing the scene between landlord and peasant. Landlord straight

away refuses to give any rice to peasant and besides that hurls abuses at him. Seeing Charandas at door he mocks peasant if he had brought a strongman with him. When landlord asks Charandas who he was, he replies truthfully that he is a thief. He threatens landlord to give some rice to peasant otherwise he would steal landlord's entire stock of rice. On being refused again, he and peasant leave with the promise to return. After some time a troupe of *Rawat* dancers enter. Charandas and peasant are among them disguised as members of the dancing group. Everyone gets engrossed in performance and in the mean time they steal the entire stock of rice.

Scene four of Act one takes place at village square. Charandas and peasant sit down to distribute rice among gathered villagers who stand in a line. They sing a song in praise of Charandas. This song in Brechtian style serves as commentary on the corruption in modern times:

There are so many rogues about, who do not look like thieves,
Impressive turbans on their heads, softly shod their feet,
But open up their safes and you will surely see,
Stolen goods, ill-gotten wealth, riches got for free. (1. 4)

After the song, Landlord comes along with havaladar and tries to catch charandas but he escapes. The scene five of act one takes place at a temple where a puja is going on. A song is sung based on epic Ramayana, praising Rama. charandas enters in the temple followed by havaladar chasing after him. When havaladar leaves, he makes a sumptuous offering. Amazed at jewellery and gems offered, the priest asks charandas about his identity. He truthfully replies that he is a thief. Priest doesn't believe him and instead asks him to spend night in temple with him. In night after priest had gone to sleep, he steals everything valuable in temple besides his donated jewellery and gems. He even steals the

golden idol of god. A song follows in which it is said that everyone steals from king to gods,

The thief is a king, the king is a thief,
 The gods and the thieves, they dance cheek to cheek,
 The doctors themselves are too sick to take care,
 Oh, here comes the thief, out of thin air! (1. 5)

Another irony in play is that the only miracle seen despite presence of religious figures like guru and priest is Charandas managing to steal without lying.

CHARANDAS. Yes, gurudev, I've stuck to my vow never to tell a lie.

GURU. As you have stuck to stealing! Only you could manage such a miracle. (2.1)

In scene one of Act two we see that arrangements are being made to safeguard royal treasury. In this scene Charandas and guru meet again. Charandas plans to steal from royal treasury and guru warns him of newly appointed minister who is known to be very strict. Guru asks him to instead devote his life in looking after him. Here we see again that guru is principally concerned with his own benefit. Charandas not budged continues with his plan to steal and asks guru to keep the newly appointed minister busy in talk and bribes havaldar to take garland to guru and help guru in keeping minister busy. Tanvir here exposes the corruption in state institutes:

GURU. Why d'you want to send the havaldar?

CHARANDAS. Why so scared, guru-ji?

GURU. He's a government servant, isn't he? Shouldn't I be scared of him?

CHARANDAS. But he's a pal, guru-ji. (Act 2 Scene 1, 93)

While guru and havaldar keeps minister busy, Charandas dressed in the uniform of minister visits the treasury on the pretext of checking the security arrangements. He just steals five golden coins because his intention was to get in notice of queen. When munim finds out that only five coins have been stolen, he slyly steals five more, thinking no one will find out. He reports that ten coins were stolen.

Scene two of Act two takes place at royal court. On learning that everyone knew who thief was queen asks them to bring charandas. Purohit suggests a way to bring him in:

Charandas has sworn to his guru that he'll never tell a lie, and he takes great pride in keeping his word. My suggestion is that you make a public proclamation announcing that if charandas is truly as truthful as he claims, he should present himself at your durbar and confess his crime. He's sure to respond. (2. 2)

Scene three of Act two takes place in queen's court in palace and portrays first interaction between queen and charandas. He reveals to queen that he has taken only five coins and that is how munim is exposed. Impressed by his honesty she pardons him and gifts five golden coins which munim stole as reward to him for his honesty. He refuses to take this gift and says that he believes in keeping money earned by his 'hard work'. Honesty of Charandas is perceived as rudeness by queen. To this he replies,

QUEEN. Charandas, you may be honest but you're far too rude.

CHARANDAS. I can't tell the difference between being honest and being rude, rani-sahib. (2. 3)

Here Tanvir exposes the paradoxical nature of truth, which is partly appreciated as virtue and partly condemned as harsh. This is a postmodern insight as it defers the commonly upheld quality of truth it being universal and absolute.

The scene ends with queen giving orders for a procession to be organized which is to be led by charandas on elephant-back throughout the town and then bringing him back to durbar. The queen wanted to award him with state honours for his honesty.

In scene four of Act two Charandas turns down to lead the procession on elephant-back and this gets him arrested by minister.

Scene five of Act two which also happens to be the last scene of play takes place in Queen's bedroom. When she sees charandas tied up, she orders for him to be untied and asks her dasi to bring food for him on gold plate. When charandas again refuses to comply with her request, to eat offered food off from golden plate, she herself orders for him to be arrested and sends him to jail to be locked in. Later in night she gives keys of lock up to her maid and asks her to bring Charandas secretly to her bed chambers. When Charandas is brought to her she confesses her love for him to him. She requests him to marry her and become the king. These were the very things which he had vowed to never take in his third and fourth vow. Again he refuses these demands of queen. Queens urges him to give up his vows by giving following argument,

Since you took these vows as a joke, forget about them. Ask your guru to pardon you. Do penance, if necessary. We can hold an atonement ceremony and gather all the ascetics and holy men and fulfill all the ritual necessary to absolve you. We'll shower your guru with alms and ask for his forgiveness. Then we'll get married. All right? (2. 5)

In the end queen asks of him to never reveal what had just passed between them. To this he reminds her that he had made a vow to never lie. Queen then screams for her guard and attendants. Guards, maid, purohit and minister come running in. She tells them that charandas had escaped from prison and had come to her suggesting that she should

marry him. Charandas is killed by guards and no one interferes to save him. Tanvir humanizes queen by showing tears in her eyes and her running away from the scene.

Satnamis enter the stage in the end of scene and places a white flag near the head of dead body of Charandas. The last song praises truth and tells story of how charandas a common thief became famous by never breaking his vow to never lie.

Tanvir didn't let scene of death of charandas to develop into melodrama. He did so by introducing a song. This is synonymous with Brechtian technique of alienation effect which is apposite to catharsis. In this technique identification with character and plot is not promoted so as to hinder any sympathetic evaluation but intellectual one. This was done so by breaking fourth wall convention. This is done so by characters addressing audience directly. The alienation effect is also 'brought about by the actor and by directorial intervention, which destroyed the illusion that they mirrored reality and foregrounded their specificity and historicity, was done away with emotionality, an idea that Brecht himself had done much to propagate" (Dalmia 183).

Tanvir made settings of this play simple so that it could be easily staged in a village square or a proscenium stage in urban theatres. He made use of songs in order to make an objective comment on a character or situation.

When Peter Brook, English film and theatre director, came to India he met Tanvir and watched rehearsal of the play *Charandas Chor*. In an interview he mentioned Tanvir and commented on the play, "Tanvir's work comes from the village viewpoint. It's comic and it doesn't attack big social problems. It sticks to day-to day question of greed, hypocrisy and exploitation" (Dalmia 271). This gave publicity to his play and based on this publicity he with his team was invited to participate in Fringe Festival. From India it was only his theatre among the invited participants.

At Fringe Festival, the play won the first prize also known as Fringe First Award. Tanvir credited acting of his actors for this prize who acted with same ease and confidence with which they had acted in their own place. After winning the prize, Prime minister of India sent a letter of congratulations to him, High commissioner invited all the actors to have 'high tea' and praised them.

River side Studio (London) organizes Festival of India and for that Government of India decides the name of the play to be sent for performance. At that time David Gothard was the director of the Studio. Government of India decided to send a play of National School of Drama directed by Ebrahim Alkazi. After reading reviews of Brook on the play *Charandas Chor*, Gothard decided to instead invite Tanvir to stage his play for the festival. For two weeks they staged the play and each time it was full house.

It is well known that Tanvir had started to collect Chhattisgarhi folk songs in his days of involvement with IPTA. The songs surrounded Tanvir in the form of harvesting songs, childbirth songs, death songs, religious songs etc. He learned the folk music of regions where he held his workshops and blended them to suit the need of his theatre. Songs of Naya Theatre has traces of *Karma*, *Jawanra*, *Panhi*, *Sua*, *Chameni* and *Dalia*. Tanvir himself explained, "Sometimes, I also modify the music to make it blend. For example, I changed the rhythm of the tablain one folk song. In another I changed the tune a little" (Malik 154-155). The purity of a form didn't ensure harmony so in order to bring about harmony for different scenes in his play he blended different folk songs.

About folk form he says the form needs a catalyst to revitalize it. The aim should be to "Not to get back to the purity of the tradition but the beauty of what is relevant in the tradition. Not preservation but development along the lines on which it has been is the point." (Dalmia 33)

Brecht advises a way of using songs which is different from the customary ways of folk forms. The folk forms keep songs simple and direct while Brecht suggests

Music must strongly resist the smooth incorporation which is generally expected of it and turns it into an unthinking slavery...Music can make its point in a number of ways and with full independence, and can react in its own manner to the subjects dealt with; at the same time it can also quite simply help to lend variety to the entertainment. (Brecht 179-205)

Brecht provided different perspectives through the songs which made audience think without suggesting anything directly to them. This aspect of Brecht is used by Tanvir when one song sings praise of charandas (when he distributes rice to peasants) and the other warns about him.

Tanvir's daughter Nageen described the routine of preparation of songs by Naya Theatre to Katyal in personal correspondence. In it she discloses that Tanvir would spend weeks on a song. The orchestra members would be asked to repeat a line of the song repeatedly until they learnt the lyrics and tune. Any change to the original folk tune was hard to teach to these folk artists who had learned the original songs by heart. She believes that without songs Naya Theatre would have been incomplete.

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