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**Unhappy Predicament of Alienation in Alekar's Play *Begum Barve*****Manish Surendrarao Gomase**School of Language, Literature and Culture  
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Among the contemporary generation of the Marathi playwrights, it is Satish Alekar who exhibits his world of experience. His play *Begum Barve*, in fact is the most prominent instance to manifest the present social panorama. The present society is certainly making progress in each and every sphere of life. However, with development, there have been some disturbing traits such as alienation, loneliness, anxiety, despair, helplessness, boredom, self-centredness, unpurposiveness and lack of freedom. Alekar has asserted in this respect:

**The people interact or communicate through language, behaviour, mannerism and nature of living style if it reduces to none produces absurdity. It is an absurdity created by mankind and so assists to comprehend the nature of mankind. Hence, the nature of disposition of such scene is unholy and naturally exhibits unpurposiveness and alienation.<sup>1</sup>**

Alekar is right to note that alienation has hovered the society. Man/woman is alienated from himself/herself, from other persons, from the society and from the world. Here human beings' self-centred and greedy nature is solely responsible for it, and it has been burdened with absurdity. Absurdity can be understood in a dichotomous manner. Absurdity is experienced subjectively by an individual in an autonomous manner and objective absurdity is the meta-narratives of life including a lack of meaning, incentive, value and purpose. Max Lewis Edward Andrew states, 'Man exists in a state of alienation'<sup>2</sup>. Because of his/her own nature man/woman cannot stand in agreeable terms with himself/herself. His/her epistemic warrant is not often at ease. He/she doubts and questions and lacks sufficiency in his/her capacity to function in an ideal manner. His/her alienation from others is also subjective and experienced by the individual as well. It is a consequence of man/woman's nature and state of being. It is this level of alienation where man/woman always endeavours to create his/her own ideology however, it is an artificial and arbitrary based on other alienated person's pattern of thinking. It emulates the same path dealing the society and the whole world since s/he ought to bring meaning, value and purpose in life but his/her attempt to achieve meaning, value and purpose is either self-referential or based on others' teleology and so it is an arbitrary. If these values are arbitrary and hence not really valuable at all, then one's life is rendered devoid of the meaning that is ascribed to it in virtue of it exhibiting such values. It means that no existence of true value renders absurdity. The play is pregnant with the instance of absurdities related to alienation and its psychological impact on the characters. Apart from this Alekar like Brecht has made usage of certain devices to produce A-Effect or alienation effect in the play.

The play *Begum Barve* reveals a sharp perception of man's alienation in a world of physical impotence or a social order in which there seems to be a dejected breakdown of human communication. The play offers a harrowing portrait of Barve, Shyamrao, Jawdekar and Bawdekar alienated from the human commodity. The play opens with an atmosphere in which characters are almost without communication. They are not interesting in knowing each other like modern

men/women who separate themselves from others for this and that reason and so sense of alienation is obvious from the very beginning. Barve, central protagonist, is chiefly affected with alienation. Barve used to play the role of female impersonator in the *sangeet natakas*. He possesses a strong wish to enact the major female characters however, he did not succeed to get an opportunity to play the role as major female characters such as Subhadra, Vasundhara, Rukmini, etc. like Bal Gandharva. It is impossible now to have such a chance due to the change in the tradition of theatre and close of certain theatres. Besides, he lives with Shyamrao at the dark room under the staircase in *chawl* who sexually and financially exploits and is dependent on Barve for bread and butter. The nostalgic effect and the experience to live with Shyamrao are so bitter that Barve weaves fantasy world. Barve's fantasy world alienates him from the real world. This alienation was an attempt to search for peace and tranquility. Something based on false consciousness residues status quo for transitory period; later on it collapses like an old stone mansion. Psychologically, he is alienated from both the real world and the fantasy world since his fantasy is interrupted by the alienated one but the real life character called Shyamrao. His condition is more pathetic than any other character's condition experienced in the life. To end isolation Barve marries Jawdekar and socially acquires a position as a wife of Jawdekar. He invites his (her) friends—minor characters from the *sangeet natakas* to celebrate the seventh-month pregnancy celebration but no one turns up to attend the function. Jawdekar (husband) pushes a swing and Barve (wife) herself (himself) sings a pregnancy song. It elucidates that Barve is hampered with alienation even in fantasy. There is none to accompany him even at the time of celebration. It is an emptiness scattered everywhere. The isolation reaches the extreme extent when Shyamrao, spoilsport-interventionist, tears down the fantasy and brings and encounters him to the harsh realities of life. He fails to get prop of Jawdekar because Jawdekar and Bawdekar reconcile with their certainty of job leaving Barve aloof on the threshold of the vast universe. Barve sings:

**Mercy help me,  
The lord is angry with me,  
The only support of my life,  
Where has he too vanished? <sup>3</sup>**

These words of Barve underline a serious breakdown of real communication between individuals in required context; we neither love nor associate truly since we do not endeavour to reach each other. Each one ponders about his own happiness, peace and tranquility at the expense of adverse condition of others. A person like Barve has to face helplessness that compels him to pray to the supreme power to take him out from the complexities of life. This mechanism substantially contributes to alienation.

The alienation and isolation of Barvesque types does not resemble to Jawdekar and Bawdekar, the two clerks, dwelling in an unnamed place. The sense of isolation in their lives prevails from Bawdekar's prolong waiting for Jawdekar at the starting point of the play. Both of them are the middle-aged men working in drab and tedious atmosphere at the office similar to their lives. Being unmarried they possess a feeling (love) for women however, they do not dare to put forward love proposal and marriage negotiation to any woman. It keeps them famililess and isolated from a sense of family. It creates feeling in them as if they are living in the world crowded with people yet it is empty and void in real sense. To escape from the sun baked realities they elude to the world of fantasy and become participants of Barve's fantasy to whom Jawdekar considers as Nalawade, woman desired by him to be his wife. He expresses his feeling to Mrs. Nalawade (Barve) and he (she), alienated entity receives it as the first shower of rain after the hot summer. They soon get engaged in marriage at mid-night in the presence of Bawdekar and start their conjugal life. It is illogical and

meaningless to witness the marriage of two men under the false assumption of supposing one of them (Barve) to be woman named Nalawade and it is more humorous for it takes place at midnight. Such relation based on an inconceivable assumption denies any concrete essence. It mere accumulates insignificant details of the baseless or unwanted things. Jawdekar floats himself in fantasy in the manner that he seems constantly on the point of being swept into titanic force he cannot tame. Jawdekar behaves like husband and more surprisingly Barve gets pregnant from him. Everything goes smoothly till Shyamrao, forlorn entity from the fantasy world, enters to witness the seventh-month pregnancy celebration. He brutally crashes the fantasy down and makes them realize the world what-it-is .Tearing down an umbrella of fantasy; Shyamrao has alienated Jawdekar from Barve and their familial life. He has been separated from his notion to have company of wife created to refrain own self from isolation however; it reaches to its doom with the spoilsport-interventionist's cruel action. He has been over-thrown to the void universe primarily come from as if it is the factual essence of life.

Life of Bawdekar walks side by side to Jawdekar. The experiences of Bawdekar are similar to his colleague. He seeks to be alone. He also wishes to have life partner to cease his isolation but his wish seems to be a denied wish because he remains unmarried. An absence of family brings a sense of isolation and aloofness. The only company, he has in his life, is of Jawdekar. With Jawdekar's marriage, he also gets estranged from Jawdekar. It experiences him that he has been drawn in deep sea of alienation, despair and agony and has no boat to rescue him. In addition to it, the boss's messenger, Shyamrao, comes with message of termination of either Jawdekar or Bawdekar from the clerical post. It intensifies a proportion of anxiety and ultimately isolation. He expresses his helplessness to Jawdekar that he is all alone to earn bread and butter for himself unlike Jawdekar who can be dependent on his wife in such a condition. The feeling of insecurity about Jawdekar like modern men/women pertaining to job develops an adverse thought for Jawdekar and Barve's cunning machination and Jawdekar sluggishness to resolve crisis are responsible for his present predicament. Bawdekar's words:

**I'd do anything to have this thing fixed. Who do I turn to at this age if I lose my job? ... I tell you, I'm even willing to murder to keep my chair.<sup>4</sup>**

Elucidate his helplessness and anger. He seeks help from no one in the trapped condition. He has no faithful ears and hands to assist and cope up with him. His sense of isolation in the present condition enrages him to think even to murder anyone to keep his job. Such thinking and behavior deliver a dark tone to life and essence of such life is 'unholy' in Alekar's word, leading to unpossibility, meaninglessness and alienation.

To understand Shyamrao's predicament, one must focus on his chronic psyche. He works as spoilsport-interventionist. He messes up his life and lives of others, he comes in contact with. Alekar introduces him in an isolated condition who has to wait for Barve impatiently. He is the only support and companion in the vast universe. His jobless status, death of mare and inevitable dependency negatively affect his psyche. He becomes a chronic person and fails to adjust himself in any situation. He is ennuui not to produce any positive sign of work. A person, who is unable to produce, spoils the things. Similarly Shyamrao goes on doing. It does not correlate him but does alienate him from his surroundings. He beats and abuses Barve that make Barve aloof from him and is seen to create affinity with Jawdekar and Bawdekar. An absence of Barve makes him an alien entity. Another incident in which a beast within him awakes is his attempt to overthrow the fantasy of Barve in the most brutal manner. It brings back Barve to his life but Barve is unwilling to accept him. It is said that something conquered by coercion cannot be merged and one does not succeed to shape it as part of

the whole. It often stands aloof. Similarly, Barve accepts him as an imposed burden of person by fortune but he rejects him as a companion. The rejection of Barve to Shyamrao is the rejection from the mankind. It is a universal experience of forsaken entity. He is all alone and alienated in the crowded world. There is no one who has trapped him in a cage of alienation; it is his chronic psyche that spoils his own life and others. Alekar has skillfully created such a character to generalize type character to endow with a sense of hollowness and an unreasoning psychic disorder of the people that consequences in frustration, alienation, sorrow, despair and pessimism in life.

Thus, Satish Alekar's all characters seem to be hampered by alienation. Barve and Jawdekar are alienated from each other due to tear down fantasy by Shyamrao. Bawdekar's sense of insecurity and unfulfilled wish separate him from Jawdekar and Barve and Shyamrao alienates himself from Barve due to chronic psyche and spoilsport-interventionist nature. The degradation and isolation in the case of these characters is chiefly associated with their absurd behavior, action, mannerism and interaction. They cheat themselves and they exploit and suppress others for their own comfort. This irrationality of human beings makes all unhappy and alienated from each other. Such characters prominently contribute to create an absurd atmosphere for the absurd play.

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