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Now, censor board wants cuts in Marathi play



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THE HINDU

Recommends changes and 19 cuts in Jai Bhim, Jai Bharat written by Janardhan Jadhav

Words like 'Khairlanji', 'Hindutva', 'Ramabai Nagar', 'kutra' (dog) are among the words that Maharashtra's Censor Board for Theatre has found objectionable in a play, *Jai Bhim, Jai Bharat* and has asked the playwright to drop them. The board has also said that permission to stage the play should be denied if it fails to make the cuts.

The board has recommended 19 cuts in the play written by Janardan Jadhav which depicts a fictional conversation between Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi.

The board has also asked the author to change some words, among them, 'Khairlanji' to 'Vairanjli', 'kutra' (dog) to 'shwan', 'Mahar' (a caste) to 'Dalit', Ramabai Nagar to Mirabai Nagar and 'Hindutva vadi' to those with power. It has even taken objection to Dalit Panther writer Namdeo Dhasal's famous poem 'Gandu Bagicha' used in the play and has asked the writer to remove the reference altogether.

"We had asked the author to tone down the play. We all know what happened in places like Khairlanji and Ramabai Nagar. Reference to those places could have stoked a controversy by hurting sentiments of others. That is the reason why we have recommended that these words be removed," said Arun Nalawade, chairman of the board.

Mr Nalawade said the censor board committee that had read the script had, in fact, put a remark saying the play should not be given permission at all. "We suggested a few cuts, but the author was not ready to amend anything. Now we have sent it to a three-member committee once again and the report is expected on Thursday," he said.

Ironically, last year a Marathi play called *Dhadant Khairlanji* was released without any cuts.

In 1997, 11 Dalits were shot by the state police force in Mumbai's Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar at Ghatkopar. In 2006, four members of Dalit family were killed by upper caste villagers in Vidarbha's Khairlanji village. Both incidents had led to huge uproar.

"How can one delete the village's name? How is it possible to wipe out the massacre of Ramabai Nagar and Khairlanji? Is Namdeo Dhasal's poem banned in this country? The censor board could not explain the rationale behind any of the cuts," said Janardan Jadhav.

Subodh More, who is organising shows of the play, said the board is imposing Hindutva thought on the freedom of expression. "The Constitution has given us the right to express reality of the

country. The board's actions are only to appease the ruling party by denying permission to the voice of dissent," he said.

He said his team would continue to fight and, if needed, move court. "We will not accept these cuts and want them to reconsider," he said.

Mr Nalawade said shows of the play cannot be held without a certificate from the board. "Let the three-member committee decide. We can give more information only after that," he said.