



MALE HEGEMONY IN THE PLAYS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR

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Abstract

In the sphere of drama, the name of Vijay Tendulkar does not require any introduction. In the galaxy of Indo-Anglo playwrights, Tendulkar is one of the most shining stars. Marathi Theatre is incomplete without the contribution made by Vijay Tendulkar. This Marathi literary figure is a multifaceted personality. He is the one who brought revolution in Marathi Theatre. An avant-garde playwright, Tendulkar has shown versatility by writing several works including one-act plays, children's plays, short stories, essay collections etc.

Vijay Tendulkar is the mouthpiece of the oppressed women in male dominant society. He has deep insight into human nature. He has proved in his plays that it is the male dominant society that does not allow woman to rise from the status of man's foot. They are exploited, tortured, taunted both physically and emotionally. They are considered inferior to male human beings as male human beings are victims of their superiority complex. Even in some of the societies they are treated as bane while the male child is hailed as boon. His plays depict that women are treated as mere commodities. He has shown how the voice of women is suppressed when they try to voice their concerns against the cruelties. He makes a psychological study of human characters in his plays. An analytical approach to his plays reveals that women are deprived of the life they wish to live. The present research paper focuses on his four plays, to bring to light the enslaved and exploited position of women in society. In 'Sakharam Binder' and 'Kamala' he brings to light how women are enslaved and exploited. In 'Silence! The Court is in Session' and 'Kanaydaan' he ascertains the fact that it is male human being who is responsible for the exploitation of women.

Key Words: *Exploitation, violence, enslaved, torture boon, bane etc.*



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INTRODUCTION

Tendulkar is an unconventional playwright of the twentieth and twenty first century. He has been an influential literary figure for last four decades. He is a versatile writer. His plays have
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been translated both in national and international languages. One may find these translations in regional languages too. A number of quality plays written by him reflect his stature as an artist. Tendulkar's plays depict the fact that it is the male dominant society which is responsible for the poor lot of women in India. They are deprived of the rights they should have, and lead a life of inequality and exploitation. Tendulkar showcases the exploitation, tortures and victimization of women in male dominant society. They are made to suffer at every step of life. They have to bear the brunt of the exactingness, jealousy and violence of men.

'Sakharam Binder' is an extremely ultimate artistic creation of Tendulkar. It has been rightly called the most naturalistic play of Vijay Tendulkar. The pivotal and titular figure in this play is Sakharam himself who is the hero of the play. The play was written in 1972. Sakharam is a binder in press and belongs to Brahmin caste though he always calls himself a Mahar and in his childhood his mother used to address him with this very name. He is a lusty type of person. The word binder suits to his personality as he binds the abandoned women to the rules stipulated by him. In the name of sheltering these abandoned women, he exploits them both physically and mentally. He considers women not more than commodities to be used at home. He keeps changing the women. He finds some abandoned woman and gives her shelter at his home. He brings Laxmi to his home and after the departure of Laxmi, he brings Champa who is tired of the sadistic behaviour of her husband Fauzdar Shinde who proved an animal to her. Champa was married at tender age. She says,

"He married me when I didn't even know what marriage meant. (P.46).

At the house of Sakharam, Sakharam dictates Champa his own terms and conditions to be followed by the latter. She has to yield to the desires and passions of Sakharam and whenever she tries to avoid him she has to face the music. Lastly the coming back of Laxmi proves to be awfully disastrous for Champa who has to lose her life. In fact the dramatist drives home the fact here that the whole of the species of women has to lead a life of such exploitation and it has been prevalent since times immemorial.

Tendulkar's 'Kamala' (1981) is a very typical play. It is based on the real incident in the life of a village young lady. The same idea of exploitation and woman market prevails in the play 'Kamala'. The play is undoubtedly stunning because in this the dramatist has brought to light the extreme kind of exploitation of women. He has shown that there is flesh market where women are auctioned and sold. There are two women characters in this play. The protagonist

of the story is Jaisingh Jadhav. He buys a woman namely Kamala to present her at a press conference and forgets all about the consequences. He outpoured his anger on his beautiful and gentle wife Sarita. The arrival of Kamala in the house of Sarita reminds her that her position in this house is also like that of Kamala. The play reveals masterly behaviour of Jaisingh at his house even though he gets into hot water and outshines his own name and tarnishes his image by buying a woman to present her at the press conference. The dramatist has tried to reveal that the lot of the women in Indian society is still pitiable. When Sarita rejects the proposal of going to bed with her husband, though she had not enjoyed Jaisingh's company for many days the latter gets exasperated and says,

“Don't I have the right to have my wife when I feel like it? Don't I? I'm hungry for that too— I've been hungry for six days. Is it a crime to ask for it? Answer me?” Instead of answering it, Sarita feels better to leave from that place. At this Jaisingh's remarks are, “The Bitch!”

It shows nothing but the male patriarchy. The relationship of husband wife is based on the notion of pulling together whereas there is everything in the relationship of Jaisingh and Sarita except friendship between them. Though Jaisingh has been with Sarita for long, he still needs to understand the psyche of his wife. He is a man with flaws like lack of understanding human emotions, lack of self control and so on.

The play 'Silence! The Court is in Session' (1967) is a masterpiece of the playwright Vijay Tendulkar. It consists of three acts. It is about a Theatre group. Tendulkar introduces a theatre group that came with a splendid purpose of eliminating a social evil from society. From a sheer drama, it takes a personal tone and the main character in the play Ms. Leela Benare is charged with the crime of infanticide. Leela Benare is taken in by Prof. Damle and he impregnates her. The case is brought in front of the court. In fact it is a fake court that assumes to be real. Tendulkar has made a trenchant attack on our so called institution of justice because Ms. Leela Benare is held guilty while the person Prof. Damle who is equally guilty is never summoned in the court. In the persecution of Ms. Benare, the helpless woman one can see a fierce psychological violence and the psychological violence becomes obvious in the play. In depicting characters like Ponshe, Mr and Mrs. Kashikar, Sukhatme who come to the fore during the trial, the dramatist has explored the psyche of these characters and revealed the hidden sense of failure pervading their lives namely the inefficiency of Sukhatme as a Lawyer, the childlessness of the Kashikar couple and non fulfillment of

Ponkshe's dreams to become a scientist. In this play or game, Benare comes to know that the game is carried too far and it is now getting personal. It is hard for to bear this indecent conduct of her colleagues but her position there, is like a caged animal. The game turned into a hunt. All the characters except Benare are shrewd. And Benare is exploited by her own colleagues. Such portrayal of women is pathetic. If a woman is litigated the attitude of the lawyer and the judge is different but when the case is against the male persons, their opinion is different then. All this shows the helplessness of women and hollowness of men in the society

N. S. Dharan in his *The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar* (1999) says, "The male figuring in his art emerges as puerile creatures, for, he portrays them as embodiments of hypocrisy, selfishness and treachery" (96).

'Kanayadaan' is a play which brought both laurels and humiliation for the writer. It is the saga of a young girl namely Jyoti who belongs to a Brahmin family. She has to lead a life of an excruciating pain because of her decision of getting married in haste to a person namely Arun who belongs to a Dalit caste. Jyoti follows in the footsteps of her father, Nath Devilalikal and wishes to create a casteless society but this utopian scheme comes to an end when she has to face life of reality out of the world of dreams. Arun exploits her at every step of her life. She has to face the anger of this split personality namely Arun Athavale. She is kicked by Arun even when she is pregnant. She is tortured and even Arun hurls abuse at her parents too. Jyoti has to lead a life which she had never dreamt of. This condition of Jyoti leaves Nath and Seva always in pain. The dream of Nath Devilalikal about the eradication of caste system is dashed to the ground. Though Nath is shaken to see the plight of Jyoti, yet he is not willing to abandon his dreams of idealism and becomes responsible for encouraging Jyoti to go back to the life of misery. It is also a sort of exploitation of women at the hands of men. Jyoti has been a victim of wife beating. She gets disillusioned by her decision to marry Arun. Nath rather insists on saving the marriage. He says,"

Seva, let not this wonderful experiment fail! This dream which is struggling to turn real let it not crumble into dust before our eyes! We will have to do something. We must save this marriage. Not necessarily for our Jyoti's sake.... This is not just a question of our daughter's life, Seva, this has A far wider significance.... This experiment is a very precious experiment. (537)

In his writings he has left no stone unturned to paint what he felt and observed in society. He has presented how women finding them helpless admit finally their fate.

Suresh Khare from Indian Express has rightly said about him, "Tendulkar's contribution to literature and theatre is outstanding. His works are widely acclaimed by critics.....he set new trends in Marathi theatre...{and writes}according to his own convictions. He is a thinker, aggressive in his approach, but a soft-spoken person".

Tendulkar has been rightly called India's best playwright by by V.S. Naipaul.

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