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The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar: A Panorama of Contemporary Indian Society

Netra Pal

Dr. Alkha Mehra

Research Scholar

Research Guide

Kanya Bhod Degree College

Assistant Professor & H O D.

Bareilly (U.P).

English Dept.

Govt. PG. College Bisalpur Pilibhit

Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar, an extraordinary dramatist of post-independence era, exemplifies how the contemporary society adds to the depletion of women as human beings and deprives them of the most human rights. He shows how women are exploited, tortured and even murdered. Tendulkar observes the human nature and exposes the ugly realities of human life in contemporary social milieu. His plays even show that he is completely against the exploitation and tries to uproot this bitter tendency of human nature.

The present paper has a minute observation of Tendulkar's all plays and shows that they deal with the syndrome of power and violence. They also depict the women not only as a commodity of male gaze and as a victim subjected to violence whether physically or emotionally. Tendulkar's plays are proved a milestone in the sense of men-women relationship at different levels. Tendulkar exposes the men's superiority complex and subtle, inverted and preservative relationship of men and women. He has observed the psychology of all the characters and put them together in the play in natural shapes. The present research paper has fully focused on all his plays to depict the various issues like gender discrimination, caste-discrimination, domestic violence and human trafficking. Tendulkar's plays divulge the message that the women are able to face and defy the onslaughts of institutional power even in the male-dominated society.

Keywords : Women, exploitation, power, violence, relationship, courage .

Tendulkar has depicted a real presentation of hypocrisy, vulgarity, violence and duplicity of the contemporary Indian society. He exhibits the brutal ways of life for our observation and comments. He portrays the sufferings of women in the male dominated society.

Tendulkar's female characters-Benare Rama, Mitra, Sarita, Kamala, Laxmi, Jyoti, Champa and Manik are a reflection of Indian Society in which they are victimized by the man made laws and other norms of society.

Tendulkar's *Silence ! The Court is in Session* exposes the hollowness of the lawyers and judges in the case of Benare. The play *Kamala* portrays the character of Sarita and Kamala who are merely objects of pleasure to a journalist, Jai Singh. *Kanyadaan* reveals a Dalit poet's psychological, physical and verbal violence. The plays *Vultures* shows the domestic conflicts and violence in the family of Hari Pitale. *Ghasiram Kotwal* is a revengeful social tragedy dealing with the theme of power and knowledge. Tendulkar's *Sakharam* is a story of a book binder who brings a series of deserted women to his home and makes them slave. *A Friend's Story* is a psychological study of an individual who is struggling hard to retain its position in the society.

Vijay Tendulkar *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a unique contemporary Indian drama in English. It presents a mock picture of court justice with Benare who is a school teacher. Mr. Kashikar is the judge and Sukhatme plays the role of a lawyer for both prosecution and defense.

Leela Benare is a middle-aged, educated and employed woman. She is a sincere and favourite teacher of her students. She is a simple, straightforward woman. She loves her profession of teaching very much and wants to lead her life in her own way. She even does not care about the illegal relationship with Professor Damle. So, she is accused of the crime of infanticide.

Being fearless, Benare accepts her teenage love for her maternal uncle as well as Professor Damle. She freely, confesses all her secrecy with these male members before the judge and the others. But, her maternal uncle and Professor Damle are coward to face the reality. They are afraid of being disclosed in the matter of affair with Benare. Being disclosed, both should be punished by the law. But our patriarchal society finds it correct for men and punishes only the women. Damle is not even called for the trial. No one understands her mental torment For them, the trail is merely a game of fun.

Tendulkar's *Kamala* is a play of real life incident in two Acts. It is the story of endless suffering of Indian middle class woman. The plays throws light on the cunning plan of a journalist, Jaisingh Jadhav. He is a male chauvinist. He purchases an adivasi woman, Kamala from the human flesh market of Luhardaga bazaar in Bihar. He buys this woman not for her domestic purpose but only for his promotion in journalism.

Jai Singh has already a wife, named Sarita with whom he treats brutally. She does all her domestic works like a slave. Jaisingh always considers her as a provider and keeper of the house but never as a life partner. But still, she accepts him as a good husband. She never think wrong for a moment about her husband. But, the arrival of Kamala, the another wife of Jaisingh makes her realize the meaningless of her marriage life.

Jaisingh considers Kamala not his wife but as an object for his publicity. He takes her to the press conference where she is humiliated very badly. Her humiliation does not move Jaisingh a little but in place of it, he becomes angry when Kamala does not give the answer of any question. It is a direct hit to her womanhood and chastity. Not only Kamala but his first married wife Sarita is also a toy in the hands of Jaisingh. But, Kamala proved to be good for Sarita because she opens her eyes to understand her real self.

Tendulkar's *Kanyadan* is a controversial play which exposes the sham and hollow idealism of the characters. The play shows how a father's idealism becomes a cause of misery for her own daughter. It is the story of a middle class family, where a daughter decides to marry with a Dalit boy.

Jyoti's father Nath, is an MLA and her mother, Seva is a social activist. They are so busy in their social and political works that they have no sufficient time for the upbringing of their children – Jyoti and Jai Prakash. Nath and Seva are very sincere for the upliftment of Dalit but they differ in their views, opinions and approaches. Seva opposes of Jyoti's decision of marrying a Dalit boy and also warns Jyoti for future risk. But, Nath supports and encourages Jyoti for this marriage. Later, Seva's warning against marriage proves to be true as Jyoti has to face the evil consequences of her decision.

The relationship between Jyoti, a high caste girl and Arun, a Dalit boy gives an opportunity to follow the old social reformers who were always in favour of such relations and supported of remarriages of widows. But, sometimes these relations of marriage or remarriage become the cause of violence, misery and disillusionment as it occurs in Jyoti's married life with Jyoti, he is always conscious about his inferior caste and inflicts cruelties and miseries on Jyoti. He is never ready to change his orthodoxy of his lower caste even after marrying with a high caste girl of Nath. His opinion is that the Dalit cannot fit into the Brahmin's Unwrinkled Tinopal world.

Ghasiram Kotwal is a play of power and violence. The play is admired as Tendulkar's best work of today. The relationship between power and corruption is the main theme of this play. The story of this play is extracted from an old phase of history.

Ghasiram Savaldas is the protagonist of this play. He is a poor Brahmin from Kanauj. He has a wife and a daughter. He comes with them to Poona in search of livelihood. Poona is an unknown city to him. So, he has to take shelter in the house of Gulabi who is a courtesan. He participates in her erotic songs and dance. There he is humiliated and got out by some Gulabi's hired people. Not only here, but in the feast of Peshwa, he is ignored for feast and is accused of stealing money of a Brahmin. Some soldiers beat him severely. Thus he is greatly suffered by this humiliation. For some time, he also remains in prison. After releasing from jail, he decides to take revenge against the people of Poona. So he says:

I'll come back to Poona. I'll show my strength. It will cost you.

Your good days are gone! am a Kanuj Brahmin, but I've become
a Shudra, a criminal, a useless animal. I'll dance on your chests.

I'll be a devil. I'll make pigs all of you. 46

Now, Ghasiram takes favour of Nana Phadnavis and becomes the kotwal of Poona though, he has to gift his young beautiful daughter Lalita Gauri to Nana who has already a great infatuation and wants to take physical pleasure from Gauri. Here Nana enjoys Gauri and makes her pregnant and there Ghasiram whips the people, arrests and imprisons them blindly. When he hears the news about Gauri who has died in attempt of abortion, he is greatly infuriated at Nana but in vain. At that time, some Poona's people complaint against Ghasiram. Nana gets an opportunity and orders for his death. Then, the angry crowd of Poona beats him, saves his head and kills him.

Tendulkar's *Vultures* is a play exposing the satanic tendencies of the members of Hari Patale's family. This family consists of Hari Patale, Ramakant Umakant and Manik. They are all greedy, ego-centric, cruel and wayward. They have no morality of family and personal relationship. They even make conspiracy to kill each other. Due to their villainous nature, they are known and called not by their own names but wolves. The title of the play is also after their ways and conduct.

Hari Patale realizes that his family is no better than the vultures only when he does not tell the secret account in bank to his own sons-Ramakant and Umakant. They both beat him to know the information of bank account. Further, they become so cruel and so inhuman that they even kick at the belly of their pregnant sister. When they are unable to get money from their sister's lover Raja, they skillfully abort her child.

Thus the play shows the violence in the family of Hari Pitale at various levels- sons against father, brothers against sister, brother against brother. This domestic violence among the members of the family increases and takes a brutal shape with the passes of time.

Tendulkar's *Encounter in Umbugland* is a political allegory. The play shows a political condition of India late sixties. The play begins with king's celebration and concerning about his successor to the throne. The King Vichitravirya has become old. So, he wants to surrender his power and prefers a life of a hermit. But suddenly he dies without giving the authority to any minister.

After the king's death, there is a political crisis in the state. Then the king's four ministers decide to give the responsibility of the state to the princess Vijaya. But princess was very weak and ignorant to the rules and regulations of the state. They want to make her a puppet queen. But, after having the power, she ignores all the ministers and keeps her attendant a eunuch, Prannarayan who is very active and expert in all the matters of the state. The princess is very fond of his advice so she appoints him as her chief adviser. The eunuch teaches her all the ways and tricks of politics. Instead of being a puppet queen of his minister, she goes directly into the public and hears the cases and problems of the people. This attempt brings a great applause and reputation to her. The people are very happy with her rule.

On the other hand, the ministers are very unhappy with the princess. They try to rebel against her but their attempt remains in vain. At last, they surrender themselves to her authority. The play comes to an end on this victory of the queen as she has overpowered even his cabinet ministers.

Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder* depicts the angry, frustrated, rebellious youth of contemporary society. Sakharam is the protagonist of the play. He is a Brahmin. His occupation is book binding. He belongs to the Urban lower middle class. He is an unmarried man but gives shelter to those helpless women who are tortured and deserted by their husbands.

On the opening of the play, we come to know that he has already kept six deserted women. He is always against the established morals of the society but he has his own concept of morality. The marriage institution has no significant for him.

Laxmi comes to Sakharam's house as seventh deserted woman. Her arrival changes a little in Sakha's life. He becomes a religious and family loving man but suddenly Champa, another rejected woman comes into his life and removes all his idealism given by Laxmi. Now, Sakharam becomes more violent, aggressive and full of sensual passion.

The play shows the triangular relationship among Sakharam, Laxmi and Champa. Champa becomes rival of Laxmi in love. Then Laxmi tells about the illicit relationship of Champa. Laxmi's this information becomes the main cause of Champa's murder by the hands of Sakharam. In this play Champa is tortured at different levels as at the hands of her mother, her husband, her male companion, and at the end even by her female companion. Both Champa and Laxmi suffer sexually, physically and psychologically at the hands of Sakharam.

Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story* describes the painful story of Sumitra Dev who is a eunuch by his destiny. Tendulkar exposes in this play how the society rejects, humiliates and ridicules the human who is a little different naturally from the other people. It happens with Sumitra Dev also in this play.

Sumitra is the central character of this play. The whole story moves around his character. Bapu and Nama are also another characters. Mitra is portrayed as having physical hormonal imbalance. She is conscious of the fact that she is different from other girls having a stubborn nature like that of a boy. But she does not think that she is misfortune for the society so she remains careless of social norms and moral values.

Being carefree of social norms she also joins the college where she is avoided by the other college girls. She does her best to make friendship but is discarded. Then, she feels disgust and keeps herself secular. Later, she finds Bapu, a junior class follow to her. She succeeds to develop her friendship with him. Bapu also accepts her as a friend with all her deficiencies. He supports her in all ways. Nama also comes in the contact of Mitra. In starting he enjoys her company and very soon he finds his life burdensome and boring and then leaves Mitra alone.

It is noted that due to indifferent aspect of society, Mitra has to suffer a lot. Here, society has no support and has no sympathy with Mitra. 'Man is a social creature' but here Mitra is looked as if she is the creature of the other world. It is so because her family members remain indifferent towards her. When Mitra is rusticated from the college, her parents also have not any emotional support. Mitra's condition becomes more pathetic when she is thrown out of her own house and lives in a women's hostel. When she thinks her further life more troublesome and full of thorns, she commits suicide.

In this way, Vijay Tendulkar has showed a panorama of contemporary Indian society through his plays. I have also reviewed all the dramas of Vijay Tendulkar and has tried to exposes the contemporary Indian society in a new way. We see that the Indian society is man made so it is always in fevour of males and leaves the females for suffering. It is always unjust for women like that of Benare, Jyoti, Kamala, Champa, Laxmi, Gauri and even Sumitra. The society does not give any support and it closes its both eyes when any woman is beaten or humiliated by any male member.

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