

Women in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar

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Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar, the Marathi dramatist demonstrates how society adds to the depreciation of women as human being and deprives them of most human rights. He shows how women are exploited, tortured and victimized. Tendulkar probes deep into the recesses of human nature. His plays delve deep into the realities of life in contemporary social milieu. He states “As a social being I am against all exploitation and I passionately feel that all exploitation must end.”

He wrote thirty full-length plays in Marathi and ten plays were translated into English. Tendulkar’s most plays, deal with the syndrome of power and violence. His plays depict the women not only as a commodity of male gaze and as a victim subjected to violence whether physically or emotionally. Tendulkar has achieved a milestone in exploring the relationship between men and women at different levels. He has focused on men’s superiority complex and shown subtle, inverted and preservative relationship men and women. He has studied the psychology of all the characters and put them together in the play in natural shapes. The present research paper will focus on his three plays, to present the subjugated position of women in society, *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *Sakharam Binder* and *Kamala*. In his plays, *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kamala* he takes the issue of oppression on the basis of gender. The play, *Sakharam Binder* is a study of human violence. His plays divulge the message that woman possesses the strength, the courage and puissance for facing and surviving the onslaughts of institutional power.

Key Words: Women, Exploitation, power, violence, relationship, courage, puissance.

Vijay Tendulkar is a prolific playwright of Marathi language. He has to his credit twenty- eight full length plays, twenty four one act plays and eleven children dramas. Most of his plays have been translated into English and in some other languages of India. Tendulkar's play demonstrates how society adds to the depreciation of women as human being and deprives them of most of human rights, related to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the Individual. He shows how women are exploited, tortured and victimized. Women are made to suffer throughout their life, is the central concern of the paper. An attempt has been made to display the unfair treatment of women that compel them to tolerate all types of violence: Physical, mental & emotional. The paper devotes three plays respectively to Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in session*, *Sakharam Binder* and *Kamala*.

In the play *Silence! The Court is in session* (1967) with three acts Tendulkar introduces a theatre group that concentrates on some social evil, dissects it and finally disrupts it for its elimination through stage performances before the villages. The present problem, the charge of infanticide is put against a spinster Leela Benare who gets pregnant the case is set to examine in a court, a fake court that assumes to be real. Arundhati Banerjee maintains that the accusation brought against Benare at the beginning of the trial turns into the verdict in last because contemporary Indian society, with its roots grounded firmly in reactionary ideas, cannot allow the birth of a child out of wedlock. This very, reversal in the attitude of the authorities expresses the basic hypocrisy and double standards on which our society is founded. In the course of court proceedings, Miss Benare's private life is exposed and publicly dissected revealing that she is a woman of loose character, Tendulkar displays, the psychological violence that makes a female individual as helpless as Lachrymose. When Kashikar, the Judge listens that Benare is a spinster, he very irrationally approves the custom of child Marriage. It also displays how women desires are repressed under the onslaught of reactionary ideas of the fundamentally orthodox society. It also displays how women are disrupted to do certain things. She cannot talk freely, walk freely & live freely. If she does this like Benare and some mishappening occurs, this misfortune will inevitably fall upon her head. It is important that it is men who ruin society but accused will remain Leela Benare. Prof. Damle is equally guilty but the trial cannot be set against him. The situation becomes complicated when Ponkshe reveals that Benare lives only for the child in her womb and will give birth to it. Now Sukhatme, the lawyer, counsels for the prosecution:

The woman.... has made a heinous blot on the sacred brow of motherhood ... Motherhood without marriage has always been considered a very great sin by our religion and our traditions. Moreover, if the accused's intention of bringing up the offspring of this unlawful maternity is carried to completion, I have a dreadful fear that the very existence of society will be in danger... Milord, infanticide is a dreadful act. But bringing up the child of an illegal union is certainly more horrifying ... 'Woman is not fit for independence'... That is the rule laid down for us by tradition. Abiding by this rule, I make a powerful plea. 'Miss Benare is not fit for independence'. (p.115)

The main charge is put aside during the trial. The characters try to pinpoint their own personal opinions and blame Benare of wrong-doing and immoral acts. The mock trial, which began just for pleasure, turns into Benare's tragedy. Benare is totally devastated. She is in a sense of fear like a caged animal, and has been dismembered morally and socially. Benare utters only these words, after her failure in love with her maternal uncle: "Life is a poisonous snake that bites itself. Life is a betrayal. Life is a fraud. Life is a drug. Life is drudgery... Life is a very dreadful thing." (p.74) she wanted to die, but she could not.

The most naturalistic play, Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder* (1972) revolves round its central character, Sakharam a book binder, a brahmin by caste but presents an antithesis to the general conception of a member of his community, He also exploits women, tortures them and treats them mere as an object of lust, both mentally and physically. Laxmi and Champa like other six whom Sakharam kept in his house. Now Sakharam brings Champa who runs away from her husband. She runs away because her husband, Fauzdar Sindhe, becomes more of an animal than a man to her. He treats her like a beast, and gratifies his sadism and sexual needs in unnatural ways. Champa bursts out in violence as soon as she sees her husband and beats him:

I don't have a heart. He chewed it up raw long ago. He brought me from my mother even before I'd become a woman. He married me when I didn't even know what marriage meant. He would torture me at night. He branded me, and stuck needles into me and made me to do awful, filthy things. I ran away. He brought me back and stuffed chilly powder into that god-awful place, where it hurts most. (p.46)

It is not only the case of Laxmi and Champa but of the whole female race from the time immemorial, women are treated like beasts and animals. From the time immemorial, women are treated like beasts and slaves. Virginia Woolf delineates the same picture of women in society:

Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates lives of kings and conquerors in fiction, in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger..... (And) in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.(p.66)

Tendulkar's *Kamla* (1981), a topical play is grounded on a real life incident. Like in his previous plays, in *Kamala*, Tendulkar has explored the condition of women in contemporary Indian society, women who are toppled throughout and are treated as feeling less objects as if they have no sentiments. Kamala and Sarita, the two women characters in the play, in the same condition and Tendulkar displays how both of them are prevented from doing certain essential works and suffer an unfair justice emotional and mental crises overleap Sarita with a sense of realization that like Kamla, she is also just a pawn in his game of chess. Now Sarita asks the overwhelming and thought provoking question; Why are women not masters like men? Why can't a woman atleast ask to live her life the same way as man? Why must only a man have the right to be man? Sarita insistently asserts on the need of a change in the concept of manhood and the possessions and execution of certain rights in all domains of life. She cries out: "This must be changed. Those who do manly things should be equal to men". Those who don't are women. And there will be some among them who have beards and moustaches too. Isn't being Prime Minister of India a manly thing? And isn't it an effeminate thing to grovel at that Prime Minister's feet? Virginia Woolfs in her *A Room of One's Own* asserts to expose women to the same exertions and activities, make them soldiers and sailors and will not women die off so much younger, so much quicker than men.

The paper discusses Tendulkar's three plays and presented varied range and reveals a single strand running through the fabric of the play. The main preoccupation is with the use and misuse of power. Tendulkar describes his plays as about the reality that surrounds us.

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