

THEMES AND CONCERNS IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S SELECTED PLAYS**Shivani Tanwar¹, Dr. Shivali Singh²**¹Research Scholar Department of English School of Education & Humanities IFTM University,
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Moradabad***Abstract***

The contemporary Indian theatre recognizes Vijay Tendulkar as one of its principal playwrights. Tendulkar explores multiple storm-causing problems through his works and depicts the various complex issues affecting our Indian society. Vijay Tendulkar was encouraged to start writing because of the literary environment that prevented his home. At the age of six, he composed his inaugural narrative. During his formative years, he observed western theatrical productions, which subsequently motivated him to devise his own creations. Upon reaching the age of eleven, he undertook the roles of writer, director, and performer in his initial theatrical presentation. Following his departure from academic institutions at the age of fourteen, he became engaged in socio-political activism, particularly within the Indian independence movement. Consequently, this commitment engendered a sense of estrangement from both his familial and social circles. A significant portion of his early literary endeavors was characterized by a personal dimension and intended for dissemination; however, his creative output evolved into a means of catharsis thereafter. Tendulkar began his professional career as a newspaper writer. When theatrical companies produced experimental shows organizations like Rangayan in the 1950s and 1960s, Tendulkar's works quickly changed the storyline of current Marathi theatre. After starting off as a generalist, Vijay advanced through the ranks to take charge of the Sangeet Natak Academy. Ten of his thirty complete Marathi plays have been translated into English. He composed plays in many Indian languages as well. Each of these plays presents the concepts of power, aggressiveness, and gender inequality in a different way. Two of his plays, *Kamala* and *Silence! The Court is in Session*, address gender-based prejudice in one way or another. The drama *Sakharam Binder* examines how aggressive people can be.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Exploitation, Violence, Power and Struggle.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of India's most influential playwrights Vijay Tendulkar was born on 1928. Tendulkar's plays have been thematically diverse, from alienation of the modern individual. In *Kanyadaan*, Tendulkar discusses the emotional and mental difficulties associated with family life. In 1969 and 1972, Tendulkar received awards from the Maharashtra state government; in 1999, he was granted the Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar. He received the Sangeet Natak Academy Recognition in 1970, and in 1998 he received a fellowship, the Academy's highest honour for "lifetime contribution."

The Padma Bhushan Award was given to him by the Indian government in 1984 in appreciation of his literary contributions. Vijay Tendulkar is mostly recognized for his Marathi writings, but he is also recognized for using his artistic ability to transform Indian drama by tackling timeless and relevant subjects. He wrote a thirty full length plays, seven one acts, six collections of children's plays, four short stories, two novels and seventeen film screenplays over a fifty year period. He was engaged in professional activities from the decade of the 1960s through to the 2000s. Although his theatrical works have been rendered into the English language, he did not undertake this endeavor himself. This sets him apart from R. N. Tagore, Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad, and Mahesh Dattani, whose dramatic compositions were either originally crafted in English or subsequently translated. Other individuals have engaged in the translation of his theatrical works into English. Tendulkar's influence to the growth and development of Indian theatre, however, cannot be denied. India and other nations have benefited from the combined impact of all regional playwrights creating plays in their native tongues. One of the main causes of the event was Tendulkar. He was India's most gifted playwright, according to V.S. Naipaul. Arundhati Banerjee's traits and attributes: "For more than 40 years, Vijay Tendulkar has been at the forefront of Indian theatre as well as Marathi theatre" (Banerjee 15).

The well-known play *Silence! The Court is in Session* served as Tendulkar's initial acting venture. In the framework of this play, the legal system serves as an example of cruelty. Leela Benare, the protagonist of the story, challenges social norms so that she can live an independent life despite her own volition. When the co-actors possess sufficient expertise to unveil her private life during the simulated trial, she unintentionally reveals that she is engaged in an extramarital relationship with Professor Damle, who is a married individual and the progenitor of five offspring. The irony is that society isn't ready to recognize the child born outside of marriage, Miss Benare is accused of infanticide at the very beginning of the trial. The issue of violence and authority was still a major concern for Tendulkar when he wrote *Sakharam Binder*. The drama sheds a great deal of insight on how a person can be both brutal and lusty. Even though he is single, he offers vulnerable ladies whose spouses have abandoned them, ejected them from their homes, or abused them physically and psychologically a safe haven. He already has six women under his power when Act I start.

2. THEMES AND CONCERNS GENDER AND PATRIARCHY

Tendulkar's theatrical works identify a spectrum of female characters, having conflicting attributes, living under an unbearable hardship in a patriarchal environment. Other plays that he authored touch on the subject of the subjugation of women, their marital dynamic, a woman's quest for selfhood, domestic violence, premarital pregnancy, extramarital sexual relationship and other related themes. Even though these problems might seem to be universal, they are rather specific in the Indian society, especially within the lower middle class, with women playing the role of mere victim of the patriarchal construct. Tendulkar's theme explorations center on the characters who always present as the vestiges of society; characters marginalized, ostracized in the society, and lead transgressive lives which transcend the social norms and ideals. Tendulkar consistently employs individuals on the periphery of society in his writing. His attitude to social

issues may be characterized as realistic or naturalistic. His plays focus on characters that are rooted in regular life rather than affluent or upper-class individuals or those who lead lavish lives. He became well-known for his biting criticisms of the hypocrisies, dishonesty, immorality, and other social evils that were common at the period, and he transformed the form and style of Indian theatre. Tendulkar said that the majority of people are unaware that evil exists in society. It is in their communities, in their families, and in putting the family members in front of oneself. Social awareness is no longer present in the common individual. One may come across new types of violence that are spreading like cancer when reading the news.

3. HUMAN SUFFERING AND ALINEATION

Tendulkar commenced his illustrious career with his renowned theatrical work, *Silence! The Court is in Session*. This play addresses a significant societal issue pertaining to the phenomenon of unmarried motherhood and the prevailing attitudes of men towards it. The narrative unfolds within the context of a rehearsal for a play taking place in a disheveled antiquated room situated in a small village, orchestrated by a theatrical collective known as 'Jagruti Sabha' from Sonar Moti Chawl. The central focus of the play revolves around the character of Miss Leela Benare, who is professionally engaged as a school teacher. She embodies a zest for life, exuding vitality and harboring immense pride in her accomplishments as an educator, firmly believing that she is the protagonist of her own existence and asserting that no individual possesses the authority to encroach upon it. All the individuals, with the exception of Miss Leela Benare, collectively resolve to initiate a judicial proceeding against Benare for the transgression she has perpetrated against societal norms. Tendulkar's oeuvre delves into the dynamics of male-female relationships, particularly through various lenses. The incestuous relationship between Benare and her maternal uncle is deeply unsettling. The alluring of a minor female by her maternal uncle serves as a representation of the dynamics of incest within conventional society, elucidating a distorted expression of the fundamental human inclination towards sexual gratification.

The play *The Vultures* (1971) occupies a preeminent position among his works regarding the themes of violence and sexuality. The narrative is meticulously crafted within a socio-economic milieu of the middle class, revealing itself through the dynamics of a family that is irrevocably disjointed. Violence and malevolence often emerge as objectives in their own right. The depiction of violence, illicit sexual encounters, and the use of abusive language are likely to shock the sensibilities of a conventional audience. Tendulkar's perspective is grounded in practicality rather than being merely philosophical or theatrical. His reflections are shaped by indelible memories from his formative years. This work represents the culmination of deeply rooted issues across various spheres. The intrinsic value of life has significantly diminished in contemporary society. The influence of monetary considerations has supplanted fundamental human values and ethical principles.

The central subject that *The Vultures* addresses is whether or not a person or group may prosper without regard for moral values. By using the contrast of *The Vultures*, the play dramatizes the avaricious members of the family's deep-seated, unrelenting wickedness, perversity, and diabolic

villainy. The family of the human Vultures is comprised of Pappa The Vultures (Pitale), his extramarital offspring (Rajani Nath), his eldest son (Ramakant), his daughter (Manik), his second son (Umakant), and his daughter-in-law (Rama, the spouse of Ramakant). Nearly all characters depicted in the drama, with the notable exceptions of Rajani Nath and Rama, are indoctrinated to exhibit behaviors that are both aggressive and malevolent. The figure was a symbol of domestic violence as well as eroticism.

Uproars, screaming, and the sounds of beatings and blows are heard as the second scene opens. Hearing these voices will help the listener comprehend the story's beginnings. Pappa Hari Pitale, alongside his sibling Sakharam, establishes a prosperous construction enterprise that subsequently gains recognition as "The Hari Sakharam Company." Their hard work has allowed them to achieve this achievement on their own. Through trickery and phony court actions, he eventually succeeds in stealing ownership of the company from his brother. Sakharam Pitale is currently homeless as a direct result of this. In keeping with the proverb, "What you plant, you will harvest," Pappa's sons and daughter have devised a scheme to succeed their father and are eagerly awaiting the chance. One of the things that Hari Pitale does is smoke. When his mouth is toothless, he makes it a habit to practice. None of his boys are treated with any respect by him. It is evident that he dislikes his kids' selfishness.

PAPPA: If I die, it'll be a release! They're all waiting for it.

But I'm your own father. After all! If I die, I'll become a ghost. I'll sit on your chest! I won't let you enjoy a rupee of it. I earned it all. Now, these wolves, the bullies! (209)

According to his children, he is a "confirmed nuisance" who "tries to seem clever" and steals another people's food. He engages in all of these activities. His opponent, his sick wife, has given him custody of their three children. But in the end, he becomes a burden to them. Pappa asserts that he is solely responsible for the cretins he has created as them. Umakant is more than happy to agree with his brother's opinion that "a mangy dog would have been a better parent." (213)

The intention of both Ramakant and Umakant to eliminate their sister is unequivocally evident. The engagement of family members in a card game for the serious exchange of monetary assets not only astonishes the audience but also serves as a poignant reminder of how interpersonal relationships have increasingly assumed commercial characteristics. The narrative of *The Vultures* illustrates numerous malevolent attributes inherent in human nature. Humanity appears to be depriving itself of opportunities for self-realization and contrition, instead becoming progressively more morally depraved.

The theatrical work constitutes a social critique of the middle-class societal framework, with particular emphasis on its treatment of women. Thus, the play exposes the male-dominated society's hatred, verbal aggression, sadistic inclinations and moral dishonesty toward women.

Characters created by Tendulkar are often seen going through deep psychological trauma and self-estrangement. His works look at the emotional conflict of a person who is not in sync with his environment or himself. This element is shown much more vividly in *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *The*

Vultures where the characters grapple with feeling alone in the world, social morality, and self-accepted lies.

4. POWER AND CORRUPTION

Ghashiram Kotwal (1972) is another political drama. This play is a musical play that blends modern theatrical methods with Marathi ethnic performing forms. The world's longest-running play is this one. Set against a historical backdrop, this drama centers on the power struggles men have and the corruption, brutality, and sensuality they indulge in. Political satire is what the play is. It portrays the society that punishes the straightforward Ghashiram and protects the dishonest Nana. As a consequence, the dramatic work presents a compelling analysis of the intricacies of power dynamics. Tendulkar delineates the rise and evolution of malevolent forces in societal discourse, forces that are summoned by political figures to advance their own agendas, as exemplified through the narrative of Ghashiram. At a superficial level, the subject matter of the play centers on the dichotomy between the personas of Nana and Ghashiram. At a more profound level, the play scrutinizes and portrays the essential attributes of the power politics paradigm, which encompasses oppression, violence, corruption, and degradation.

5. MARRIAGE, SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIP

The figure *Kanyadaan* portrays has changed how he views marriage and life in general. Some references to sex are to be expected in his discourse since he confronts the pressures of sex head-on. Tendulkar engages with a weighty theme within the theatrical work *Kanyadaan*, endeavoring to reveal the entrenched affliction of caste discrimination and social stratification present in our society. With the fervor characteristic of a reformist, Tendulkar seeks to reconcile the disparity between the upper and lower castes by promoting the concept of inter-caste matrimony. Nath Devalikar and his progeny Jyoti were profoundly influenced by the Gandhian principles advocating for a casteless society, aspiring to catalyze societal reform.

The play *Kanyadaan* deals with the themes of marriage and the marital issue and its repercussions. Vijay Tendulkar exhibits selfishness in the play. Seva, the spouse of MLA Nath Devalikar, works as a social worker. This family of Brahmins is upper class. Jyoti tells her parents that she has chosen to wed a young Dalit man named Arun Athawale. Nath is content and at ease on the inside since he wants to abolish the class structure, which is his desire, whereas Seva is horrified to learn this. He gives Jyoti permission to marry Arun, whom she has known for the last two months. Jyoti shows up looking sad and confused. Then, quite inebriated, Arun follows. Since he had battered Jyoti, he begs for her pardon. Once more, Jyoti abandons him. Arun's autobiography, which addresses the persecution and deplorable circumstances of the impoverished and lower class, is published. The irony is that Arun himself lives like a parasite on Jyoti and takes advantage of her. By endorsing Arun's autobiography against his will, Nath delivers a hypocritical speech. This is intolerable to Jyoti, who permanently leaves home. Ultimately, the idealism Nath is transformed

into the realist Nath. At the conclusion, he angrily claims that his house has been contaminated by the arrival of such a Dalit (Arun). The readers are left wondering about Jyoti's marriage's destiny at the conclusion of the drama.

6. MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP

The contemporary social landscape is increasingly intricate within the frameworks of psychological, sociological, and patriarchal paradigms. Within the patriarchal structure, the status of women is markedly detrimental. Tendulkar explores a multitude of themes throughout his dramatic works. The motifs of gender inequity, sexual conventions, aggression, societal equilibrium, interpersonal dynamics between men and women, the institution of matrimony, social dilemmas, authority, and ethical considerations have been significantly represented in his theatrical works. One spouse in a unilateral partnership had a romantic engagement with someone else before to marriage. The complexity of our contemporary culture is increasing every day.

The processes of industrialization, globalization, capitalization, scientific advancement, and technological innovation have collectively facilitated the increasing mechanization of human life. The contemporary individual's existence is profoundly disjointed and lacks the coherence that was once inherent to it. Ultimately, these dynamics have culminated in the evolution of interpersonal relationships. Throughout the annals of human history, the bond between a male and a female has been regarded as profoundly significant in a moral and social context. The representation of the man and woman in the literary work is a recurring theme in the canon of world literature. all of the era's political, social, cultural, economic, and moral issues. The increasing complexity of contemporary civilization is a result of the psychological, social, and patriarchal facets of contemporary society. The standing of women is inferior in a patriarchal society. A patriarchal culture does not provide a woman with any means of expressing her love, passion, or other emotions. Simone de Beauvoir addresses the value of women in respect to men in both the old and new testaments in his book *The Second Sex*.

“For the man is not of the woman but the Woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man.... For the husband is the head of wife even as Christ is the head of church. Therefore, as the Church is subject upon Christ, so let the wives be to their husband in everything” (Beauvoir de Simone 1974: 110).

The Vultures takes place against the backdrop of an upper-middle-class household. The arrival of Hari Pitale's offspring, namely Umakant, Ramakant, and Manik, constitutes a legal obligation of hers. The spouse of Ramakant is referred to as Rama. The individual residing in the garage is Rajani Nath, Hari's son, who was born outside the bounds of marriage. Except for Rama and Rajani Nath, every character in the narrative is lusty, avaricious, and corrupt. Hari is the name of the Pitale family's most significant members. In partnership with his brother Sakharam, he creates a prosperous business. They worked really hard, both of them. After a short while, Sakharam is finally forced to relinquish leadership of the firm to Pappa. Sakharam becomes a very poor man as a result of this.

In no manner does Pappa show his boys love or devotion. His children have no regard, affection, or respect for their father. He doesn't respect or love his kids either. Ramakant is shown packing a bag in the play's opening scene, with his wife Rama standing still in the background. They will both be leaving the house. Upon hearing footsteps, Rajani Nath dashes to the door and yells for Rama, but she has already departed. This leads to Rajani Nath's scathing diatribe, which strongly ends the play. It offers information on the play's past. Rajani Nath talks about the filthy behavior of Pappa and his kids, save for Rama, in his soliloquy. Rama's innocence, love, shyness, smile, and sensitivity are all recalled by Rajani Nath. He also recalls the smile on Rama's face. He also remembers how mother had given him some food and drink before putting him to bed, and how he had to go hungry that day. Her one and only wish for Rajani Nath is to be permitted to have children. Consequently, she persists in maintaining an inappropriate association with him. Manikis represents the sole progeny that Pappa possesses. Her behavior, which includes drinking, smoking, using foul language, and being ugly, demonstrates her frantic temperament. In every aspect, she is the complete opposite of Rama. All she wants is a successful career and a happy marriage. Rajani Nath and Rama, on the other hand, share a cordial romantic relationship. In an attempt to steal money from their father, Manik, Rajani Nath, and Umakant attack him. After forcing their father out of the house, they hatch a plan to kill him. It shows their animosity as well as their crudeness.

7. EXPLOITATION AND BRUTALITY

In the dramatic works of Tendulkar, female characters lack an autonomous identity; they serve merely as marionettes manipulated by their male counterparts. As a playwright, Tendulkar exhibits profound concern regarding the systemic exploitation and victimization of women within a patriarchal framework. To conduct a thorough analysis from the perspective of an individual who is oppressed, reaches a saturation point, and vocally confronts all forms of oppression while forging a new pathway for the disenfranchised, the plays *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *The Vultures*, and *Sakharam Binder* have been selected for examination.

The narrative of the theatrical work, *Silence! The Court is in Session*, serves as an explicit critique of patriarchal ideologies and the authority of traditional educational institutions in suppressing the expressions of a determined female individual. As Nitika Garg says, "Tendulkar, through his plays, asserts that gender has been defined by the patriarchal fathers as a social construct. As sex is a biological phenomenon, the attributes of the masculine and feminine are constructed through gender paradigms which is to give sense of identity to the individual in a society. Gender politics is a universal problem" (Garg).

The principal crisis within the narrative pertains to Benare's profound disillusionment in romantic relationships with two male figures initially with her maternal uncle, followed subsequently by professor Damle, with whom she experiences an 'intelligent' sentiment characterized by a 'love for an unusual intellect.' However, for these individuals, her corporeal existence holds significance, whilst her intellectual capabilities and the potential for a shared life with her are

disregarded. Notably, amidst these distressing interactions, it is solely Benare who bears the burden of concern, in stark contrast to the men who contribute to her unfortunate circumstances. The designation of the theatrical work, 'the Vulture,' suggests the insidious and lethal characteristics that reside within the human psyche, which consume and exploit others for the sake of individual avarice. The sibling duo, Ramakant and Umakant, exemplifies a profound absence of any compassionate human emotions, driven purely by their insatiable desire for wealth. Their sister, Manik, who is with child and has sustained a fracture to her leg as a result of their machinations to deceive her affluent paramour, Raja of Hondur, subsequently suffers further violence as they assault her abdomen in a bid to terminate her pregnancy.

The theatrical composition, through its depiction of characters, their behaviors, environments, and linguistic choices, is profoundly somber and macabre. When individuals exhibit frailty in physical, moral, and spiritual dimensions, the eradication of malevolence becomes exceedingly challenging, resulting in a world that would be solely inhabited by scavenging creatures. The drama exemplifies a proficient representation of domestic abuse, wherein women serve as the primary victims within a patriarchal framework.

The drama "Sakharam Binder" serves as a vivid illustration of a self-centered individual's overwhelming carnal desires and the resultant powerlessness experienced by women, which coerces them into enduring both physical and sexual subjugation at the hands of their oppressor. The characterization of Laxmi and Champa, as perceived through the lens of Dawood, elucidates the essence of these women's existence. He expresses admiration for Laxmi, who maintains the household through her devout rituals, while also depicting Sakharam's practice of performing pooja to divine images.

Tendulkar's representation of Laxmi and Champa encapsulates the manner in which women are objectified and discarded by their spouses, exhibiting a profound intolerance towards the physical abuse inflicted upon them. Their anguish resonates with the experiences of numerous women who endure their plight in silence and passivity. The female characters within this theatrical work function as a conduit for articulating the muted tribulations faced by such women.

8. VIOLENCE AND POWER

Domestic violence, commonly referred to as intimate partner violence, pertains to the mistreatment of an individual who is engaged in a close personal relationship. Domestic abuse manifests in various forms, encompassing verbal, physical, and sexual violence, in addition to threats of harm. Individuals may experience abuse from a spouse, yet it is predominantly perpetrated against women. Both heterosexual and same-sex partnerships are susceptible to occurrences of domestic violence. The dynamics of power and control in abusive relationships are consistently characterized by an inherent imbalance. The phenomenon of gender-based violence within domestic settings has garnered considerable scholarly attention from authors across diverse literary genres. Tendulkar's play "*Sakharam Binder*" serves as an invaluable resource for comprehending the various forms of domestic abuse prevalent in Indian society. The

aforementioned drama delineates the predominant manifestations of domestic violence, psychological, encompassing physical, financial, verbal, sexual, and spiritual dimensions.

Tendulkar further investigates the phenomenon of sexual violence, which represents an intrinsic component of the intricate dynamics between genders, in conjunction with this reprehensible manifestation of physical aggression. In his dramatic production, *Sakharam Binder*, Tendulkar utilizes the central character Sakharam and his engagements with diverse female figures to exemplify the most flagrant instance of sexual exploitation. He introduces women who are abandoned, mistreated, and impoverished, catering to their basic needs. However, his engagement with them is transient. They are relegated to the roles of domestic servants and subjected to sexual exploitation by him in order to fulfill his corporeal desires. Various manifestations of abuse, including severe beatings, physical assaults, and even homicide, occur without any discernible variation in the personalities of the characters portrayed in the plays. As noted by N.S. Dharan, "Tendulkar's creative genius, sharpened by his keen observation and seasoned by journalistic experience, found expression in his plays" (Dharan).

9. TENDULKAR'S IDEAS ABOUT DRAMATIC- WRITING

Tendulkar possessed established beliefs regarding theatrical composition, in contrast to his contemporaries among Indian English playwrights. Elements such as plot, characterization, dialogue intricacies, spectacle (structure), and comprehensive stage directions are distinctly observable in a series of discourses and interviews concerning the architecture of plays. Nevertheless, the dramatist posited that characterization and structural elements constituted the paramount factors in the efficacy of a play, with dialogue being of secondary importance. He suggested that the writers consider "the sense of structure" and "the skill of characterization." Dramatic conversation, he thinks, is a valuable addition to characterization. Additionally, he claims that the structure is felt rather than seen. According to Tendulkar, women in Indian society bear the brunt of the institutional body of power. Violence is frequently sparked by a clash between society and women. Tendulkar's preoccupation with this power and violence psychosis is evident in most of his plays. His plays convey the idea that women are capable of withstanding the attacks of institutional authority because they are strong, courageous, and powerful.

10. CONCLUSION

Vijay Tendulkar never bothered to assign blame or provide praise; he simply wrote what he felt was right. His writings express his views on human existence and society. He wrote on the fight of the defeated individual against hostile surroundings. Vijay Tendulkar shown that he is a gifted writer who believes in his vocation. His writings and social activities both demonstrate his humanistic and unafraid mindset. He expressed his own opinions without hesitation in his writing. As a member of the middle class, Vijay Tendulkar skillfully captured the evaluation, issues, aspirations, and transgressions of middle-class society.

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