



The Deprivation of women in Vijay Tendulkar's Play: A Review

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Abstract :

Vijay Tendulkar is the pioneer of Marathi theatre. He has given the voice to the social problems of women and common masses. Most of his plays deal with the theme of love, sex and violence, and exploitation of women. The anger and frustration of the women is elaborated by him the Indian context. The ideas implicit in the themes are revolutionary. They are opposed to the conventional norms and established values. The present article emphasizes on human nature and its complexities. The women protagonists are found revolting against conventional society. Tendulkar displays his love of humanity and his commitment to human values. The study explores shifts and changes that have taken place in the modes of human thinking, feeling and behaving with women. His women characters are mostly suppressed and exploited, by the male patriarchy.

Keywords : Injustice, womanhood, inequality, sadism, victimization, exploitation,

Introduction :

Vijay Tendulkar was one of the leading Indian playwrights with his play, Silence! The Court is in Session in the late Sixties. It won Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay Award and Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for playwriting in 1971. His Ghashiram Kotwal which is a political play won him international reputation in the 1970s. He was also honored with India's Padma award, Padma Bhushan. His reputation is equally marked with controversies as anti-Brahmin and anti-Dalit. And he received both applause and sneering with equanimity.

His experience of life, travelling around the country, watching



of the plays and Hollywood movies had strong influence on him as a successful dramatist. He shares his memories of childhood days in an interview:

As a school boy I had watched the Hollywood films playing in my hometown, not once, but each one over and over again. I still remember the visuals, not the dialogues which I didn't understand. A more conscious education in what the visual could do came when I worked with Rangayan Theatre group in Bombay... After that I wrote mimes for quite a while. I felt the visual had unlimited possibilities, the word was useless. But I am a playwright, words are my tools, I had to use them. (Tendulkar, Interview)

Vijay Tendulkar is the representative of the contemporary modern Indian drama. His plays generally deal with exploited women, precarious life of middle class couples, broken promises and adamant decisions creating turmoil in the emotional world etc., picked up from extraordinary situations. Tendulkar's themes are woven round the characters that are always the dregs of society, the debased, the fringe people and persons leading life not in keeping with the accepted norms and values of society. His plays are the 'plays of ideas' falling in the line of G.B. Shaw, Ibsen etc., and He deals with social themes in naturalistic or realist manner. This study deeply analyzes the selective plays of Tendulkar like *Shantata Court Chalu Ahe* (Silence! The Court is in Session 1967), and *Sakharam Binder* (Sakharam, the Bookbinder, 1972),

Each of the play is an enigma by itself, vivid, unsurpassing in characterization. All these plays are significant writings of Tendulkar and each play is a separate entity in theme, presentation and conflict. In all these plays Tendulkar used common man's language. His plays do not deal with rich or elite class and their sophisticated life style but down to the earth characters. He has changed the form and pattern of Indian drama and was noted for criticizing the hypocrisies, promiscuity,



dishonesty and such other vices existing in the society.

Women in Silence! The Court is in Session :

Tendulkar has concentrated much on women problems-domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, unequal pay, sexual discrimination. The courts of law are not doing full justification for solving women problems. In fact, the play highlights the duty of courts of law towards women problems and a sense of responsibility is necessary on the part of courts of law in solving these problems. It is a criticism on elite-court relations in India as an unsatisfactory arrangement, where being structurally part of the state, the courts are expected to maintain high degree of independence and to be ensured of a democratic policy.

Tendulkar's bleak portrayal of women has been criticized. Many women in his plays are portrayed as victims of society with a sense of resignation for not overcoming their hellish existence. But one thing can be obvious that women's issues are relevant today and it is a defeat of our society. The position of women in Indian society has always tormented the minds of social reformers, planners and administrators for ages. Women are endowed with a feeble mind as well as body. Her position in society is respectable and venerated. Concerted efforts have been made particularly, after the Indian independence, to raise women from their present state and bring them decency and dignity on par with men.

Indian constitution is ensuring women 1 394 / 720 discrimination and guarantees equality of opportunities for all citizens. Whatever may be the enactments, in practice the women are still neglected. They are not enjoying their rights and suffer from a number of socially inexorable disabilities and inhibitions. The position of women in the middle class families is further worse. Dowry cases in particular are more prevalent, wretched and are not entering the records. The suppressions and harassments resulting from dowry cases are being



limited to the indoors in this male dominated society. The social structure, norms and values which govern human behavior do not favour women to use their rights and thus create obstacles towards the enforcement of legislation.

The play begins, Samant, a local chap and Leela Benare, the heroine found conversing. Benare tries to take every opportunity, to get closer to him as she enjoys his physical proximity though as yet, Samant has no reason to suspect her. However, Samant's total indifference to her maneuvers and his complete innocence leaves Benare with no option but to accept him as good company till the arrival of the rest of the troupe. Benare feels light-hearted and gay in Samant's company. She springs a surprise on the rustic Samant with a sudden confidential proposal: "Let's leave everyone behind, I thought and go somewhere far away with you."

Like most of the women, she supports patriarchal values in spite of their being harmful to women. That is why the cynics of feminism declare that women are the enemies of women. But this is due to the fact that women are urged for their survival to absorb, observe and propagate patriarchal culture as aptly argued by Srilatha Batliwala in her brilliant article, "Why do women oppress women?" Patriarchy is the system that traces familial descent and economic inheritance down the male line. Indian society is mostly patriarchal. Yet there are by enthusiasts, social activists and militant feminists. The earliest image of woman that history provides is that of the ".....food-gathering, child-feeding female....who is both protects and victimized by the brute strength of the male, who gains a brief respite as mother-goddess and matriarch- then loses all claims to power and status as man invents the plough and takes over farming."



Status of Women in Sakharam Binder :

Sakharam Binder is Tendulkar's most intensely naturalistic play. According to critics, "for many decades no play has created such a sensation in the theatre world of Maharashtra as Vijay Tendulkar's Marathi play Sakharam Binder. It explores the complication of human nature and the manifestation of physical lust and violence in a human being. After the production of Sakharam Binder, Tendulkar was accused of deliberately choosing sensational themes to get cheap publicity. He says, "Every play is not for everybody, a play is a work of art when it reveals its theme and essence exclusively through its mode attendant detailing rather than through statement and speech." Sakharam Binder fulfils these criteria and is therefore an artistic play.

Sakharam Binder throws light on the institution of marriage, sex, exploitation of women, domestic violence. The character study of Sakharam Binder, Laxmi and Champa shows an interesting human relationship and these characters are symbolical. Sakharam is in the habit of and has the talent to bring women to his house and make them sexual and work slaves. Sakharam particularly selects or catches the women who happen to be unfortunate, either expelled by their husbands or escaped from the houses. Like this Sakharam invited into his life eight women. After the entry of seventh and eighth women, namely Laxmi and Champa respectively his life receives a big jolt. These two women represent two polarities of feminine response towards this sensual patriarch. Laxmi stands for a traditional Indian woman with her god-fearing religious, docile nature and her unflinching devotion towards her husband, no matter how great a tyrant he is. When she is thrown out of her house by her husband on her failure to give birth to a child she is rescued by Sakharam, she accepts the vicissitudes of life without any protest. She clutches Sakharam as her only option to survive and begins to worship her 'saviour.' She demonstrates the patterns



of thinking instilled in women by the patriarchal tradition.

On the other hand, Champa is a boiling cauldron of fierce revolt that guts down all the men around her, irrespective of her protector or annihilator. She is a woman who has walked on her alcoholic husband as a strong rebuff to his cruelty perpetrated upon her. In her, Tendulkar points out that marriage is an institution in which sexual relationship for a woman is possible only if the self is forgotten in the stupor of alcohol, pleasure is possible only through inflicting pain on the other and self-awareness is nothing but the mute and moron-like acceptance of inhuman subordination or supremacy. The wild, wayward, vivacious and defiant Champa's final surrender to Sakharam, after considerable resistance, signifies a kind of 'compromise' or 'payment' for what she has been provided by him - food, clothe and shelter.

Laxmi and Champa are also connected in an extremely complex relationship. When Laxmi returns, Champa does not visualize any possibility of competition from her for she is confident of her own sexual attractions. In fact, she pities this homeless, shelter less woman. It is the kindness of this otherwise hard-hearted woman that makes it possible for Laxmi to stay in Sakharam's house. Yet there is also a touch of contempt in Champa's treatment of Laxmi - the contempt that a stronger person feels for a weakling. The two women between themselves satisfy the different needs of the male they share - one his domestic, the other his physical demands. Though Laxmi finds nothing wrong with her association with Shinde, her moral sense is outraged by Champa's affair with Daud and she uses this opportunity to malign her rival. This brings out the latent hatred in Laxmi for Champa. Sakharam's masculinity is doubly hurt through the knowledge of Champa's physical association with Daud, since he himself can no longer satisfy her.

Laxmi is not just a victim of Sakharam's strange code of sexual conduct. She also comes to know that he is an extremely rash and



choleric character. He is abusive, calculating, pitiless, drunkard and a sadist. He frequently uses his belt to beat Laxmi cruelly when he is even slightly annoyed. Laxmi tolerates everything for about a year and then one day Sakharam gets tired of her and cancels the agreement. Laxmi decides to go to her nephew's house in Amalner.

Champa is a modern woman in many respects. Modernity in the sense she is practical, reasonable and sensible in her deeds and words. She is a woman who never compromise and is unlike Laxmi who blindly worships her former legal husband and the latter, illegal husband, Sakharam. Under the instigation of Laxmi, Sakharam commits a grave crime otherwise he is not such a person who goes to the extent of killing another person on the grounds of infidelity.

Violence, abuse, exploitation in the domestic side of Indian society is a bitter criticism that Tendulkar highlights through Sakharam Binder. Sakharam brings home six abandoned wives or run away wives. There is no safety for wives or marital bliss in the families. Either there is violence at home or sexual exploitation that is driving women out of their houses. As long as this situation prevails in the society, characters like Sakharam try to make use of the opportunity and exploit women.

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