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Critique of Vijay Tendulkar Plays with a Special Reference on Kanyadaan and Sakharam Binder

¹ Tripti Sinha and ² Dr A. Babu Rajendra Prasad

¹ BA English, Amity University of Languages, Amity University Lucknow Campus, Uttar Pradesh, India

² Associate Professor, Amity School of Languages, Amity University Lucknow Campus, Uttar Pradesh, India

Email: tsinha172@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper is a sum up of Vijay Tendulkar's works and gives us a gist of his works. This project will tell us about the complicated relationship between their society and mental distortion. It explores the role of masculinity in our society. This paper will briefly discuss the portrayal of women characters in Vijay Tendulkar's play. The family, personal, political, and social environments that Vijay Tendulkar's plays depict lead to a great deal of violence against the characters- physically, sexually, psychologically, and verbally. Tendulkar's play represents middle-class life, and because of his deeply held beliefs, the men in his plays frequently treat their female counterparts brutally. The paper's conclusions discuss how the female protagonists overcome their unfavorable environment to become strong, and, independent people.

Keywords: *caste, women's condition, mental distortion, social reformation, masculinity, household balance, victimization, man-woman relationship, abuse, mental and physical domination, suppression.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In this research paper, we will explore two powerful plays of Vijay Tendulkar, a pioneering playwright who gave many prominent writings to theatre. We will delve into his imaginative writing style, themes, and his influence on the theatrical world. He has been a very influential writer as he uses

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simplistic language and originality in his writings. He portrays Indian society in the way it showcases the problems India faces.

He was a creative screenwriter, playwright, and social commentator primarily in Marathi. His plays often revolve around complex characters and talk about social and societal norms. He used to write briefly about stereotypes set in our society. He also used to write for television and was also a political journalist. His writings have revolutionized the Indian Theatre and made readers develop a taste for theatre and his writings. He was influenced by Tennessee Williams especially when it comes to presenting social problems in his writing.

About his life:

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar was born on the 6th of January 1928 in Gurgaon, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. He belonged to a Gaud Saraswat Brahmin family and his family was politically very evoked there was constant criticism and ideas shared between the family members. His father worked as a clerk but also used to run a small publishing business and was a writer, director, and actor of amateur plays. He used to take young Tendulkar to the rehearsals of his plays. His father also used to take him to a large book house owned by his publisher friend. Tendulkar used to wander around the shelves and used to read short stories in Marathi. He was born in a very plain family as his mother used to tell him stories of great political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. This evoked the feeling of nationalism in the mind of Tendulkar.

This literary environment at his home encouraged him and soon he was into literature and wrote his *first story* at the *age of six*. He was very interested in reading plays and he grew up watching Western plays which inspired him to write plays himself. He was deeply influenced by the rich cultural milieu of Mumbai and the progressive social movement of the time. Then at the age of eleven, he wrote, directed, and acted in his first play *Amchyyavar Kon Prem Karnar* (Who Will Love Us). At the age of 14, he *participated* in the 1942 Indian Freedom Movement (*Quit India Movement*), leaving his studies. He did his education in Kolhapur but whatever learning he had was from real-life experiences, observations, and impressions that enriched his personality and vision of life. He showed all his knowledge and wisdom in his writings.

Tendulkar had two role models who influenced him while he was in Pune, Dainkar Balkrishna Mokashi and Vishnu Vinayak Boki. Dainkar was a well-known figure in Marathi literature and Vishnu was his Marathi teacher at school and a successful writer. These writers rendered a dominant influence on the personality of Tendulkar. In one of his interviews, "I was very much influenced by the writing of D.B.Mokashi, Shivaram Vashikar and the films like Manus and Kunku produced by Prabhat Film Production Company and the Western playwrights like Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams". (Deshpande,1976: 33)

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He was also influenced by playwrights like Shaw, Ibsen, Shakespeare, etc. During his school days, he used to skip classes and spend time watching Western plays. He also frequented the city library where he read a lot and felt inspired to write plays himself. He used to act in the plays which he wrote. (He used to feel the lines of character, how they move how they speak.)

Tendulkar's first job was in a printing press, then he shifted towards journalism. As a journalist, he wrote many articles in daily columns of newspapers, which also influenced his writing style. He started his career as a *freelance writer*, then worked as a sub-editor in the daily Navbharat and Maratha, and then as an executive editor of the magazines, *Vasudha* and *Deepavali*. He was the Chairman of the General Council, of Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi from 1978 to 1982 and of *Sangeet Natak Akademi* from 1977 to 1981. He was made Vice-President of The National School of Drama in 1979. He was also associated with All India Radio and Doordarshan.

He received many awards from Central and State Governments for his literary achievements. Maharashtra State Government Award (1956, 1969, and 1972), the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1971), The Filmfare Award (1980 and 1983), Padma Bhushan (1984) and many more.

About his literary works:

Tendulkar has done many works that have been negatively criticized for how he portrays Indian society yet he has written many plays that brought a revolution in Indian theatre. Some of his famous works are; *Devachi Mansae* (1995), *Silence! The Court, is in session* (1972), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972), *Safar* (1991), *Fifth Woman* (2004), *Mitrachi Goshta* (1981), *Sakharam Binder* (1972), *Kanyadaan* (1996), *Kamala* (1982) *The Vultures* (1974), *Five Plays* (1992), *Kutte* (2007), *Eka Hatti Mulagi* (2005), *Sari ga Sari* (1964), and many more plays like this. He is also appreciated for credit translations such as *Lobh Nasava Hi Vinanti* (1972), *Lincoln Yanche Akherche Divas* (1964), *Halfway House* (1971), *Tuglaq* (1971), and many more.

He often used to show an authentic portrayal of our society through his writings. He briefly discusses how men are of our society. Vijay Tendulkar's play depicts the socio-cultural and political reality of human life. In his play, he projects the vulgarity and nakedness of the society. The philosophy behind Tendulkar's play is based on the perception of the society. In one of his interviews, he says,

“that neither my characters are cardboard characters; they are not my mouthpieces nor do I speak their language. They have their separate existence and expressions.”

2. PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S PLAY

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“Kamala”

In Vijay Tendulkar’s plays, we can see that he shows a very limpid representation of our society in which he shows how patriarchal our society is and how women are not only suppressed by men but deal with physical and mental abuse. In his plays, I also came across domestic violence, demining women, humiliating women, and the individuality of women. He also demonstrates his female character struggling consistently to make his female character liberal in a male-dominated society. In his play Kamala, all three women Sarita, Kamala, and Kamalabai are exploited, victimized, and tortured. In this, we can see how women are fighting against society for their existence and freedom to live the life they all desire. Another was Sarita, an educated woman who was suppressed by his husband and could not provide herself with the life she desired. She was a puppet in the hands of her husband, she used to follow her husband’s orders without questioning it. We can see in this line how dominating her husband was, -

“It is I who takes decisions in this house, and no one else. Do you understand”? (Kamala, 1982: 42)

From the line, we can see that Sarita was a very obedient wife who always wanted to satisfy the household responsibilities, but she used to feel disrespected in her marriage. She didn’t have a child which used to make her feel lonely in the big house. She often used to feel like a slave who had to fulfill his sexual desire and fit into the social expectation of being a domesticated wife. Also, Kamalabai was the victim of violence as well. She was also facing the same problem as the other two women as her husband neither respected her nor loved her. He also used to order her around and give her an attitude. Thus, we find all three women in the play Kamala, were facing domestic violence, and domination from their husbands. In Tendulkar’s play, women are at the center. The roles of women play a very significant role in his play which shows how women are marginalized and all the issues they face.

“Silence! The Court in Session”

Leela was a lively, independent, free-minded, and talkative woman who loved to recite fanciful poetry. She was a schoolteacher who used to participate in community theatre. We can see that all the men in the play were very satirically humiliating women. The play also shows how women are stereotyped in society and how men get scared when women grow. Other than Leela, Mrs. Kashikar we can see that she was a very domesticated woman who always listened to his husband, and whenever she used to share her opinions, she was told not to give her opinions as his husband showed whatever she was saying was wrong. She says that she has to keep quiet at home and now in the community theatre room (where they were practicing the mock trial) as well. This showed that she was not able to express her ideas and thoughts which made her underconfident. From the character of Mrs. Kashikar, Vijay Tendulkar portrays the psychological assault on self-esteem and how insecure they are made to feel just because they are women. Now if we come back to Leela who is the central character of the play, was humiliated by the men who were present there. She was accused of an outlawed relationship with one of his colleagues Professor Damle and she is having an illegitimate child. This made her furious, and shocked

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and her expression changed completely. Vijay Tendulkar showed her emotions through a monologue which he showed by freeze stage he showed so that, Leela could express her emotions and thoughts she had. Tendulkar does not constrain himself as he creates a dynamic in which it is not clear if she is defending others or herself. She was accused of immoral behavior, and she was dismissed from teaching.

“My private life is my own business. I’ll decide what to do with myself; everyone should be able to! I’ll decide what to do with myself; everyone should be able to! That can’t be anyone else’s business; understand? Everyone has a bent, a manner, an aim in life. What’s anyone else to do with these? ...Again, the body! (screaming) This body is a traitor. This body is a traitor. (she is writhing with pain). I despise this body –and I love it! I hate it – but – it’s all you have in the end, isn’t it? It will be there. It will be yours. Where will it go without you? And where will you go if you reject it? ...” (Five Plays, 1992: 116)

From this, we can see how to get that Tendulkar explores the emotions of women. He shows the psychological amendment of women and how they are trapped in societal expectations and thinking. The men in this play are shown as hypocrites, selfish, patriarchal, and treacherous.

“Sakharam Binder”

Vijay Tendulkar has explored the characters in this play very authentically and relatable. The characters in this play are very intense. It explores the themes of domestic violence, alcoholism, and domination. The play revolves around two women Laxmi and Champa and the man Sakharam. He is a Brahmin man, selfish, has excessive lust, and is violent. He didn’t believe in the institution of marriage. Instead of getting married, he used to keep desperate women who were thrown out of their houses, he used to give them shelter to live in. He didn’t have many rules but demanded whichever woman who lived in her house has to treat him as their husband and has to follow all the moral and domestic duties of a wife. He states that,

“Maybe I’m a rascal, a womanizer, a pauper. Why maybe? I am all that. And I drink. But I must be respected in my own house. ... In this house what I say goes. Understand? The others must obey, that’s all.” (Sakharam Binder, 1972: 126)

Whichever woman used to stay at his house had to cook, clean, and follow his orders. Laxmi was thrown out of her house as her husband died. Nobody was ready to keep or help her not even her parents. She had no place to stay so she stayed with Sakharam and agreed to all his terms and conditions. She was religious, loyal, hard-working, kind-hearted, and docile, but Sakharam was a man who was like an animal and used to treat women very poorly. Laxmi was a domesticated woman who used to do all the household work in Sakharam’s house. But Sakharam was a patriarchal man who didn’t care about Laxmi at all. But Laxmi was a nurturing woman she used to take care of Sakharam. But he used to beat Laxmi up whenever he used to drink. Whereas if we came to Champa, she was just the opposite of Laxmi. She was sexually and physically abused by his husband. Due to all this abuse, she became very blunt and

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tough. She had so given up that she said I want to leave in this house and be there for him physically rather than be eaten by several men outside. This describes her psychological trauma from the sexual harassment his husband did to her. Here Tendulkar showed the dominance of men and how patriarchal men destroy a woman's life. Just so Champa can get a place to stay she agrees to the physical terms of Sakharam. Both the women in the play can see that they don't have an identity of their own and without their husbands, they don't have a life to live. Tendulkar describes them as mere puppets of their male fellows. In this play, Tendulkar shows an image of women crushed under a male-dominated system. The representation of these characters shows how women are treated as objects by their husbands and Sakharam. An individual who is deeply involved is impacted by domestic violence, also referred to as intimate partner abuse. Threats of violence and verbal, physical, and sexual abuse are just a few of the many diverse ways that domestic abuse manifests. While spouses can abuse anyone, women are the targets of domestic violence the most often. Domestic abuse can occur in same-sex relationships as well as heterosexual ones. In abusive relationships, there is usually an imbalance of power and control. An abuser uses frightening, harsh words and behaviors to control a relationship. The issue of domestic abuse is no longer sufficiently discussed in official forums, in talks about women's emancipation, in surveys, or media reports. Authors of different genres have given the problem of gender-based violence in the home a lot of attention

In the play, Laxmi is a timid woman who used to worship Sakharam and used to take care of Sakharam and the house. Sakharam once said, Laxmi used to worship his husband's shirt and used to say that he is my god even when his when that man wanted to kill her". Here we can see that she was always the prey of any situation. Whereas, if we talk about Champa, Sakharam's admiration for Champa grows with each conversation she has with him. Compared to all the other ladies Sakharam had lived with, Champa is unique. As soon as she speaks, she takes control of Sakharam, and as a result of her presence in his life, Sakharam fails horribly. His self-awareness as a strong man fades, and he submits to Champa. In this comparison, we can see that Laxmi is always shown as an innocent woman. How she used to talk to the ant and the crow, which created an impression of her being naïve. But there is a sudden shift when Sakharam kills Champa, Laxmi was the one who buried her in the ground which shows how the prey becomes the predator. This shows how to protect her life and Sakharam takes a huge step which is opposite to her personality.

All things considered, Sakharam Binder is a complex web of peculiarities and mysteries. Every main character plays a part in the resolution. Nobody can be completely freed from responsibility, and the destruction that results at the play's conclusion is due to everyone's input. In contrast to many of Tendulkar's other works of literature, none of the characters can be considered an idol or an example, but the dramatic impact that their collective human faults generate is undeniable. Instead, they seem much more genuine, human, and grounded in reality. Tendulkar has painstakingly painted a realistic but imprecise portrait of human nature and inclinations, which are liable to change depending on the circumstances. Because none of his characters are perfect, his drama is authentic, real, and genuinely captivating.

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Vijay Tendulkar has personal experience with the numerous crimes and acts of cruelty that women endure when living in their homes. His play *Sakharam Binder* is an excellent source of information about the various forms of domestic violence prevalent in Indian society. The bulk of domestic abuse, including its financial, sexual, psychological, verbal, and physical aspects, is shown in the drama previously stated. Vijay Tendulkar logically depicts intrapersonal and interpersonal issues. He portrays the social justice issues, violence, and politics that are pervasive in the community.

“Kanyadaan”

Vijay Tendulkar's play *Kanyadaan* doesn't just focus on the subjugation of women but also on caste marriage. The play depicts untouchability and violence in Indian society. The play deals with several social issues like physical violence after marriage, negligence of parents towards their children, patriarchal society, alcoholism, etc. The play also showed how parent's idealistic approach affects the life of their children. Arun is a Dalit, raw man who was fighting for the Dalit system, he was also a writer against the caste system and all discrimination he faced from his childhood. He got married to a Brahmin girl Jyoti, who was an independent, intelligent, noble, and very understanding woman. Arun is not a sensible man and used to beat up his wife Jyoti stating she makes her angry as she is from upper caste. Arun hated people who were from the upper caste as they were the ones who were responsible for his miserable condition. He hated them so much that he wanted to kill and rape them. He stated that he wanted to,

“Drink up the blood of the beasts.” (Kanyadaan, 1996: 18)

Arun was a manipulative and disgusting man who used to abuse and disrespect Jyoti's parents. He used to beat Jyoti up and then used to drink and create a scene saying that he is not a good man, he wants to cut his hands and he loves her a lot. Arun always used to say that he loves her a lot but his words were against his actions.

“Hear that? Jyoti doesn't want to see me. My Jyoti doesn't want to see me. My Jyoti is telling me to go away. It is not her fault, not her fault at all. It is I who am at fault. I am the offender, a great offender in her eyes. Whatever I do, I will not be forgiven. Never can I be forgiven. I am a great scoundrel, rascal, motherfucker, II beat her, with these bloody hands. I beat her badly; with these very hands, I beat her up. I beat Jyoti. I make her suffer. I behave worse than an animal. She will never forgive me, I know it. Jyoti, you are not destined for me, this is the truth, Jyoti. After all scavengers like us are condemned to rot in shit. But Jyoti, I loved you from the heart. My love is not false, Jyoti, it is true. With these hands, I hurt you... I must break them, throw these fucking hands away.” (Kanyadaan, 1996: 42)

From this, we can see he wants to believe that he loves and respects her a lot but he used to beat her up even when she was pregnant. He wanted Jyoti to think that, because of all the suppression he had faced

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since childhood had turned him into a beast. He used to beat and kick her brutally, she used to have an internal wound in her stomach. Arun suppressed his anger against the upper class but when he married one, he brought out all his emotion and anger on her.

The violence shown in *Kanyadaan* is not only physical but emotional and mental as well. Tendulkar showed a very true reality of the society by the characters like Arun and Jyoti. Jyoti is a smart, independent, and intelligent woman. I think the idealist approach of Jyoti's father made her marry Arun even when he slapped her before the marriage. But Jyoti's father favored and sympathized with him for the things he went through and supported him. As a father, I think he failed Nath and should have thrown out Arun when he returned to take Jyoti. Nath should have stopped her daughter from going back with him and stood for her. This play is also like other Tendulkar play which describes how physical violence destroys a woman's life. It also showed the man and woman relationship as the woman as in Jyoti wanted to support Arun but he was an animal who used to abuse her physically. It also showed Arun's inferiority as he only suppressed and expressed anger toward his wife. *Kanyadaan* was also influenced by Freud's Psychoanalysis, Industrialisation and Existentialism.

“Ghashiram Kotwal”

It is a musical historical play and one of the most controversial plays of Vijay Tendulkar. The play depicts the portrayal of women very complexly which shows the socio-political dynamics and traditional gender roles and stereotypes widespread in society. Lalita Gauri is the central character, the daughter of Ghashiram who becomes a crucial figure in the play. The play shows us how women are treated as mere objects and are not respected in this patriarchal society. The play has three women Gauri, Chandra, and Gulabi who are victims of patriarchal society. Tendulkar has given very few lines to the female characters of the play even to the central character, this was done because he wanted to show that women are not given a voice to speak and are neglected by society. All the women didn't know about their rides and even if they did they were not allowed to follow them. Gauri is a symbol of the exploitation of females in our society and how for power they have to fight against everything. Tendulkar's portrayal of Gauri challenges the traditional ideas of femininity and submission. Gauri transformed during the play from a naive girl to a symbol of resistance against oppression. For instance, Gauri's mother is a silent sufferer who does not objectify anything and is also shown weak in the play. Several of Tendulkar's plays have strong female characters. The women are not very important. We saw here a variety of women, Gulabi, who stands in the prostitution, the Brahman woman, who is driven from her home and accused of prostitution and Gauri who is young and innocent and represents all the young ladies who are preyed over by individuals such as Nana, who is portrayed as an object of commerce. The female character's status as sex objective is evident. In the political game between Nana and Ghashiram, they are puppets and playthings. Ghashiram does not announce a novel aesthetic. Tendulkar claims that the fusion of Marathi tradition from his employment was a response to his quest for a means of narrating the tale he wished to tell, Ghashiram began with a topic, moved on to a particular historical story or

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incident, and then started looking for a shape. The plays of Vijay Tendulkar depict moral decay, degeneration, and depravity.

3. CONCLUSION

All the plays of Vijay Tendulkar, depict the complex personalities of human beings. He defines themes such as lust, power, violence, women empowerment, politics, societal norms, and many more. All his plays show all kinds of social evils in society such as corruption, domestic violence, subjugation of women, patriarchy, caste system, and many more. His play also explores inhumanity, absurdity, hypocrisy, and more themes. From all the plays we discussed earlier, we can see that Tendulkar dealt with many contemporary issues like the social, political, and economic conditions of Indian society. He also writes about themes that unravel the exploitation of power and latent violence in human relationships. Women are marginalized and oppressed in this society by men. Vijay Tendulkar is a leading contemporary playwright. In an interview, Tendulkar once said, I have not written about any hypothetical pain or created an imaginary world of sorrow. I am from a middle-class family and I have seen the brutal ways of life by keeping my eyes open. My work has come from within me. As an outcome of my observation of the world in which I live, if they want to entertain and make merry, fine go ahead, but I can't do it, I have to speak the truth. He used to say that he wanted to show the reality but it always concerned me. By all these sayings we can see that he wanted to show the patriarchal society in which women are objectified, violated, and sexually abused. Tendulkar's approach to Feminism is reflected through his plays.

The plays of Vijay Tendulkar present a diverse cast of strong female protagonists who fight against institutional oppression, challenge social standards, and defy stereotypes. Tendulkar invites the audience to evaluate their preconceptions and beliefs about gender roles and identities by illuminating the various ways in which women negotiate the intricacies of a patriarchal culture through subtle narrative and sharp social critique. A particular emphasis on the morbidity of his plays brings to mind Freud's description of human civilization as a universal neurosis and Nietzsche's comments about "the disease called the man". His plays address nearly every facet of contemporary human existence and mirror the disenchantment felt by post-modern thinkers. In the modern world, social inequality, class struggle, physical and mental repression, lack of excitement, skepticism, and hopelessness cause people to react violently. Violence is typically reserved for the inferiors since they don't know how to respond to it.

As we saw in *Kanyadaan*, Arun only vents his resentment at his wife because she looks to be beneath him. He feels confident in Jyoti's impartiality and her lack of reaction to his aggressive actions. The man becomes more hostile and violent as a result of the constant barrage of violence. The discontent of the current generation stems from the erosion of human values. The discontent with the current generation stems from the erosion of human values. There is no morality left in the society. The emotional toll that violence takes has to be brought by the younger generation. Conflicts based on class, religion, and lastly nation are becoming more prevalent every day. However, it is important to keep in

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mind that exploitation and social inequality cannot be solved by violence. Many of the stresses and strains that characterize modern life stem from demands placed on people by their schooling, jobs, and marriages, as well as from widespread despair, unemployment, workplace issues, and automation displacement of workers. All of these factors can contribute to a rise in certain types of abnormal behavior.

Vijay Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder* portrays the many forms of domestic violence against women in cohabiting couples in an authentic manner. The dramatist does a good job of showing that domestic violence does not only affect married couples. These days, it can be found in a variety of relationships, including cohabitation. Men like Sakharam employ cutting-edge strategies, like live-in partnerships, to accomplish their objectives. When a woman is no longer needed, they abandon her and create codes that work for them. These predators skillfully carry out their attack strategy and ensure that they have total control over women right away. They employ a range of methods of domestic abuse, including as financial, emotional, physical, and psychological abuse.

In an interview he said, most males have a lady inside of them and most women have a male in them. There is never a perfect equilibrium. A person may possess a strong woman factor, have a natural knowledge of women, or his inherent manhood, which makes him naturally interested in women. The reader will be able to tell the differences between the two. First of all, the women in his literature are more internally feminine and less outwardly feminine. In the second case, the lady he writes about will primarily be a sensual, physical being with additional features like economics, etc. However, the tension in each will differ, as will the women they write about. But the stress in both will be different also the women they create in their writing. I say this when asked but also caution that it may be only a theory.

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