



A Critical Perspectives on Vijay Tendulkar Selected Plays

G. Sankar^{[a],*}; Megala Rajendran^[b]; V. Jayalakshmi^[c]

^[a] Assistant Professor, Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India.

^[b] Associate Professor, Department of English, Kebri Dehar University, Kebri Dehar, Ethiopia.

^[c] Assistant Professor, Department of English, R.M.K College of Engineering and Technology, Thiruvallur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu India.

* Corresponding author.

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Abstract

This Present paper has been discussed and proposed to study the critical perspectives on Vijay Tendulkar selected plays. Tendulkar as an Indian play writer, who has written many famous plays in English to the development of Indian writing in English, but even Tendulkar has been mainly focused in this paper to draw a sketch of the playwright's personality based on his treatment of numerous themes and characters in his plays. Tendulkar has written basically all his plays in his native language 'Marathi'. It is contribution or co-operation of many translators who has been translated his plays in English and in many other languages. But English version is one of the most popular than that of other language versions. And about the themes and the sources of his plays it would not be wrong to say that all of his plays are based on his individual experiences and his direct observation of postmodern society. Tendulkar is basically a social reformer and through his plays he wants to reform the society by highlighting some burning problems of society.

Key words: Violence; Self-alienation; Exploitation; Humanitarian; Social evils; Hypocrisy

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Vijay Tendulkar was born in 1928 in a Marathi Brahmin family and about his career as a playwright and a writer it is evident from study of his biography that he began his career as a journalist in 'Marathi Weakly'. He remained in this job a number of years. In 1948 he became the assistant editor of the Navbharat Times, all this while he had started writing short stories and later he switched to writing one act plays, writing full length plays was natural progression, from his very first play, Grihastha (1957) to Safar (1992). With the view to reform the society Vijay Tendulkar selects 'Middle Class men' their social conditions, and their behaviours and attitudes toward society especially problems of man and women. In most of his plays Tendulkar has tried to highlight the problems faced by men and women in the society. In his observation whatever he finds, illegal, no proper, and imbalanced and deformed he has tried his best to expose those problems through his plays using satirical method to cure the society from such types of burning problems. His plays are useful for both reading and stage performance. There is a brief discussion on some of his plays which gives the proof of his dramatic shaping and achievements.

Vijay Tendulkar is the representative of the contemporary modern Indian drama. One can find varied characters – criminals coming out of the jail, 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. Regional drama in India is getting the status of "National Theatre" which in turn will make Indian English Literature rich and varied, forging a link between the East and West, North and South. Major Indian language theatres in India -Hindi (Mohan Rakesh), Marathi (Vijay Tendulkar), Bengali (Badal Sircar), and Kannada (Girish Kannada) have made fruitful experiments.

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.,. He deals with social themes in naturalistic or realist manner. The thesis takes up six plays for the in-depth study and analyses: *Shantata Court Chalu Ahe* (1967), *Gidhade* (The Vultures, 1971), *Sakharam Binder* (Sakharam, the Bookbinder, 1972), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (Ghashiram, the Chief Inspector, 1972), *Kamala* (1981), *Kanyadaan* (The Gift of a Daughter, 1983), each of which is an enigma by itself, vivid, unsurpassing in characterization. All these six 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.

Vijay Tendulkar, who started his career as a journalist turned to full time play writing finished 30 full length plays, 24 one act plays, several middles, articles, editorials and 11 plays for children. For almost 40 years he stood as a stalwart in the Indian writings in English. He started his career with *Shreemant* (The Rich Man), in 1955. He is a Marathi and has written his plays in Marathi language and pioneered the experimental theatre movement in Marathi and guided it till his death.

Tendulkar became 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 honoured 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. (p.124)

Tendulkar's depiction of violence and corruption in all walks of life is extremely disturbing, yet, real, and applicable today if not more. Talking about the relevance of Tendulkar, actor, Amol Palekar says:

Tendulkar is not only contemporary but also relevant. It's we who have failed. We have to find answers to the questions that

are raised by his work. I have been trying to talk about the place of women in our society in my work. When I look at Tendulkar's plays, the turmoil and questions, I have understood his men through the failures of his women; through the fights, I want his women to put up, but they don't. And I think what a crushing male dominated system! Tendulkar gives you a sheer range of work with quality and hard-hitting strength. (pp.6-7)

Another issue that Tendulkar raises throughout his plays is the meaningless behaviour of modern man with that of equally self-centered society. Tendulkar harps upon the theme of isolation of the individual and his confrontation with the hostile surroundings. His imagination is preoccupied with the exploration of the real and therefore his plays may be described as realistic exposures of middle class moral and psychological dilemma. In concluding his paper on *Athol Fugard and Vijay Tendulkar*, C. Coelho aptly observes:

In his portrayal of human relations and tensions, Tendulkar depicts the violent tendency of egotistical man and equally self-centred society. His primary concern in plays like *Sakharam Binder*, *The Vultures*, *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Silence! The Court is in Session* is the failure of human relations due to man's inheritance to his fellowmen. There is nothing superficial or exaggerated in his depiction of the vital and often violent stages of man in our society today. (p.137)

Tendulkar's men and women suffer not only for their inherent weakness but also by the cruel attacks of the society. In *Kamala*, Jadhav loses his job on political as well as commercial grounds. He is a victim of the popular journalism and false prestige. Also the protagonist, Kamala is the product of male dominant society, corrupt moral and ethical values prevailing in the society, the society which looks down upon women mere slaves in other words sex slaves. In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, Ghashiram sees his own destruction both by his inherent craze for power and Nana's power politics. He is a victim of power game. Tendulkar depicted the maneuvers of power in its worst facet. Benare, in *Silence! The Court is in Session* becomes a silent sufferer by her submission to her passions and exploitation of women by men and cunning intrigue plotted against her by her fellow human beings. The society maintains double standards, favourable ones for men and biased ones for women. The mock trial scene mocks women. It generalizes that women despite of the injustice meted to them in the society are supposed to show loyalty towards men, humiliating themselves silently but pretending decency outwardly.

Tendulkar's *In Silence! The Court is in Session*, the protagonist Leela Barare, who is central character of the play. All the incidents of the play move around her, the play is based on behaviour of urban middle class peoples, selfishness, greed, jealousy and hypocrisy. Leela Benare economically self-stand is a school teacher. And remaining members of the group are Mr.Kashikar is the chairman of the dramatic association. Mrs. Kashikar is the housewife, who follows her husband as a meek shadow. Means she follows her husband each time in and outside of the

house. Mr. Ponshe he is an Inter failed clerk. Sukhatme is a lawyer; Karnic is an actor by profession who has taken credit to prepare the dramatic group well. Balu Rokade is a college student who is adopted by Kashikars. Prof. Damale is a professor in real life. Though He is not present in any scene of the play on the stage but he causes a great significance in the play even after being absent. Shamant is an innocent villager from the village near which the play was to be performed. When every member of the group assembles there and they come to know that Mr. Ravate and Prof. Damale are not coming due to some reason. This causes a great tension to Kashikar. He is sad and worried about the performance which was scheduled for tonight. At this Sukhatme tells Mr. Kashikar not to worry about it. I will play the role assigned to Damale, and all of them agree to give the role of fourth witness to Samant which was assigned to Rawate. The main problem arises is to make understand the court related activities to Samant. So they play a Mock trial court a play within play and through their trial all of them create an imaginary case and torture Leela Benare by disclosing some private affairs of her life. They charge upon her the guilt of infanticide and all of them ganged upon her, they tear her through their comment on her private secret life. All the members of the dramatic association even Mrs. Kashikar hurts her bitterly by giving some socking evidence on the accused Benare's private life. Means all of them torture her at the name of mock trial.

However, in the mid of the play sometime they remind Benare that they are not really torturing her it is a joke but it does not recover the pain of Benare and the only weapon to save her chastity is to be silence, so Benare preserves it till the last of the play and at last she reveals her soliloquy in a long dialogue and she collapse at stage holding the end of a chair. It means this play depicts the exploitation of female by male and even today in male dominated society the condition of the woman's is very critical. This critical condition has been shown in *Silence! The Court in Session* through the character of the Benare, being independent, self-stand, clever and sufficient to do well everything she is doomed to be slave of her colleague us they torture her.

The story of *Silence! The Court is in Session* is based on Tendulkar's own observation of the society. He finds these types of activities prevailing in the society even when we talk about the male-female equal right and capacity. Title of the play is very significant because since the beginning of the play the protagonist Benare preserves silence during the court was in session to save her chastity elsewhere there was no alternative for her. About its acting and actor it would be very significant to say that the play is very simple to act and an ideal actor can play easily the role of allotted characters. It is a renowned fact that Tendulkar is a social reformer from teeth to nail and in this order whenever he observes any social evil he tries to put it in front of public through his plays, to with

an aim to make them think about the burning problems of the society. Sakharam Binder is one among his social plays. In this play Tendulkar has focused on poor middle class men's conditions and on their behaviors. Sakharam is cursed Brahmin, he is the character of the play who escapes from his house at the age of the eleven with the fear of punishment by his parents. So wandering in the open streets and facing many troubles he becomes rude and joins the job of a book binder in a press.

His suffering makes him rude toward the social institutions and traditional beliefs. He does not believe in the holy marriage institution. And he brings the rejected women of the society in his home and he enjoys and tortures them sexually and physically. As per his habit he brings a woman named, Lakshmi, a poor, sensitive, terrified, religious and good working woman. Her husband had thrown her out of house because she could not produce child and due to some other misunderstanding. Sakharam brings her in his home and tells her that in spite of all bad habits he is the master of his house and he must be respected in his house in exchange of giving her shelter and food: she agrees with him and starts living with him. But as the passes of time Sakharam a torture her and she leaves his house and goes to her nephew house.

After her departure Sakharam brings another woman, Champa. She is totally different in terms of behavior with Lakshmi. She is not silly like Lakshmi. She does not serve him physically but she is smarter than Lakshmi. Sakharam fulfils his sexual need with her but other household he has to do himself. After sometime Lakshmi returns to Sakharam's home being humiliated and being blamed of theft by the wife of her nephew falsely. At this Sakharam kicks her and does not allow her to live in his house again but Champa shows pity upon her and allows her to live in the same house saying that she will fulfill your domestic needs and I will physical. But one day Sakharam in influence of liquor beats Lakshmi and drives her out of house at this Lakshmi discloses the secret love affair of Daud and Champa. Hearing this Sakharam becomes out of control and losing his temper kills Champa. After murder of Champa, Lakshmi encourages and consoles Sakharam to keep calm and cool mind of what has happened. She promises him that she will lead a happy life with him and fulfil his all needs.

Tendulkar's *The Vulture* is a very terrible domestic play of Vijay Tendulkar. Through this play Tendulkar has shown, the limits of human greed and jealousy and misconduct in the behavior of human beings. Tendulkar have compared the members of a family with vultures. Hari Pitale the father of Ramakant, Umakant, Manik and Rajaninath disown his own brother from his business by cheating but with the passes of time his business destroys and what else he has saved, he has loosed and in the beginning of the play his sons Ramakant, Umakant and daughter, Manik torture him to acquire money from him

and to know that something else he has hidden with them so they beat him, abuse him and after much torture he tells them that seven thousand he has saved in PNB. Ramakant and Umakant exploit their own sister by blackmailing and breaking her leg and aborting her child which was growing with the result of Manik and King of Hondur love Affair. In their family the wife of RamaKant Rama has some qualities of human being among those four pitiless vultures. Her husband does not provide her the pleasure of a husband but fond of son. So he goes near many Hakims, Hermits and result it was in vain at last when Rajaninath comes to know the condition of Rama, he establishes sexual relationship with Rama and makes her pregnant, but soon, this secret is disclosed by Umakant about her adultery and Ramakant aborts that child.

In the beginning when this play was written Sensor Board Banned upon its production because of its inhuman outlook but later it was passed by sensor board and it was successfully played on the stage and it became popular. This play it is very appropriate by Tendulkar, which symbolizes the members of Pitalas family with vulture except Rama and Rajaninath, because their behaviours is greater than that of original vultures and if we talk about the language and diction of this play. We find that it very poor use of language. We can see in each dialogue of every character except Rama who did not use abusivelanguage even son for father, brother, sisters, father for sons and daughters, Bastard, bloody, scoundrel and some other abusive words have been used without any hesitation so we find in this play inhuman relationship. Ghashiram Kotwal is political Allegory. This play has also much social significance. The story of the play has been taken from the Peshawai Empire. Ghashiram a Kannaujian Brahmin comes in search of job in Poona and he is ill-treated by the Brahmins of Poona and he swears that he will take revenge at any rate and he will make the city of Poona the city of pigs. To fulfil his desire he sells his newly blossomed girl Lalita Gauri to Nana Pandanavis in exchange of the post of Kotwal of Poona city.

Tendulkar's *A Friends Story* is another most important play dealing with an important issue of the contemporary society. The theme of the play has a great social significance and it is also the product of Tendulkar self-observation of his contemporary society. The story of this play is something different from the other plays. The playwright himself has played the role of Sutradhar and narrates all the major incidents depicted in the play very adequately. The story is very amazing and interesting the story deals with an incident of Bapu's college life. Bapu is a student of graduation, one day he passes through the door of girl's hostel he finds photograph and he puts it in his pocket and it is finds that the photograph of a girl (Sumitra). And he decides to return it to her and one day at evening he happens to see her going on cycle. He calls her and at last he gives her the photograph. She asks something about him and he tells that he is her class-

met. She takes the photograph and runs away. Since then they begin to meet each other as a good friend and they share the feelings of each other. After sometime Bapu's room partner informs him he has been appointed the monitor of dramatic association of the class and teacher has announced that Male and Female will play the drama separately. So he exclaimed with grief that there is a need of a girl who can play the role of male. So he tells Bapu to tell Sumitra to do so but he forbids him. But Pandey goes directly to her and tells the problem. She agrees at his request and at the day of program she successfully plays the role of male in which she act as a lover of a girl named Nama very effectively and the show was appreciated by every one for its genuine action and dialogue delivery.

Finally the researcher has been deliberately proposed that through his research with the brief discussion on all the six plays it is observed that Tendulkar is a versatile genius in the field of drama writing. And his plays depict the social reality of many folded aspects of contemporary Indian society. The language and elements of drama being used by the playwright provide a place to Vijay Tendulkar among best classical playwrights of the world .

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