



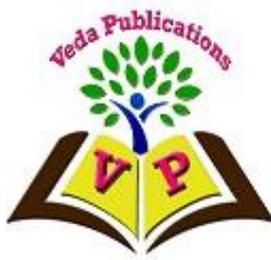
THE ISSUE OF EXPLOITATION IN THE PLAYS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR

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ABSTRACT



Since our independence in 1950, the name of Vijay Tendulkar has been in the forefront of the Marathi drama. His personality both as a man and writer is multifaceted. Vijay Tendulkar is the most eminent and creative dramatist among the modern Marathi Playwrights. His plays *Sakharam Binder* and *Ghashiram Kotwal* created a storm in society and at the same time, he won the highest award in the field of dramatics, on an all India level for his play *Silence! The Court is in Session*. His literary tendency can be observed through his numerous articles, short stories and one-act plays. Though his eyes are focussed on the middle class, his chief targets are the human mind, the way of life and the complexities there in. Most of the Tendulkar's plays are the studies in violence, exploitation, power, hypocrisy, greed and repression in different forms of the contemporary Indian reality. Exploitation is one of the most common themes in his plays as he portrayed the element of exploitation successfully. Tendulkar's plays *Kanyadaan*, *Kamala*, *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *Sakharam Binder*, *Ghashiram Kotwal* etc., depict the element of exploitation well. Exploitation is common for both men and women. Men and some Working women are being exploited out of house where as women are exploited at home. It is not exaggeration to say that there is no play of Vijay Tendulkar without the issue of exploitation with which, perhaps, he became an outstanding playwright in modern Indian English literature.

This Reseaech article makes a humble attempt to explain how the element of exploitation is successfully employed by the playwright, Vijay Tendulkar.

Keywords: Agressors, Exploitation, Jealousy, Self-Alienation, Hypocrisy etc.

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The play, *Kanyadaan* of Tendulkar exposes the theme of exploitation well. Jyoti, a young Brahman woman comes from a politically and socially active family. Nath Devalikar, her father, is an MLA. Her mother, Seva is a busy social worker. Nath is a busy man who is out of home almost always on tour delivering public speeches. Seva is also busy organizing women's rallies and camps. Jyoti has fallen in love with Arun Athavale, a dalit youth from a village, whom she has known only for two months. Arun is poor, but talented and he is a B.A student. One day she discloses her wish to the parents and brother. Her mother is shocked to hear this. But Nath is excited and dismisses his wife's questions concerning the boy's background and occupation as irrelevant. Seva warns Jyoti of the consequences of her hasty decision saying that Jyoti has been brought up in a specific culture and she may not be able to handle it. But Jyoti tells her mother that she will manage the consequences. Jyoti brings Arun on one day to introduce him to her parents. Arun is dark-complexioned and has a harsh face, but good looking. During the conversation, Arun grows more on the subject of untouchability. His words spit venom. They express his hatred for Brahmins. Jyoti tells him that she is not a touch-me-not girl, Arun suddenly seizes her arm and twists it violently. She is painfully hurt. Seva enters witnessing this scene. After some time Arun leaves the house without having the tea that is brought by Jyoti. Though Nath speaks in favour of Arun, he advises his daughter to think over the matter. But Jyoti says that she does not change her mind and her decision is final. Jyoti and Arun get married.

Scene I of Act II opens with Jyoti, who has become tired and crushed after a few months of married life with Arun. She comes home with the determination not to return to him. Jyoti tells her parents :

"I have left him... I am not going back to him again... never. I am fed up with him. Fed up! Fed up!" (535).

All are shocked greatly listening to her words. Arun enters fully drunk asking for Jyoti's pardon. He says to Nath that he will fall at her feet to beg her pardon. He takes out a knife saying that he

will cut off his arm with which he beat Jyoti. Seva asked Arun why he has beaten her daughter. He responds, "What am I but the son of scavenger. We don't know the non-violent ways of Brahmins like you. We drink and beat our wives. We make love to them..... but the beating is what gets publicized"(540). Jyoti, who has been watching all this, leaves the house with Arun to avoid further embarrassment to her parents and brother. Seva tells him that Jyoti has become pregnant and she is advised rest by the doctor. But she has failed to bring her daughter to home. Nath feels praise for Arun who has shown the world that he is a powerful creative writer through his autobiography. Seva tells Nath that such wonderful writer (Arun) wants to remain an idler. He wants his wife to work. On the top of that he wants to kick his wife in the belly because of her high caste. Nath is asked to chair a discussion on his son-in-law's book. But he refuses to this as he has discovered that Arun is hypocrite and an avenger. Seva tells Nath that Arun, in his book, has said about injustice and exploitation is hypocrisy of the first order. Because Arun himself exploits her daughter. She adds that Arun is like a shameless parasite, lives on her daughter's blood and on top to that he drinks and beats and taunts Jyoti about her caste and about her parents, heaping foul abuse on them for being high born. Nath asks Jyoti who will take care of her during delivery. She replies harshly that she has her husband and she is not a widow. She never asks their help. she leaves the house, obviously, never to return. Nath breaks down and lies on the sofa, a totally defeated idealist-father.

Sakharam Binder of Vijay Tendulkar depicts the theme of exploitation in a well manner. *Sakharam Binder* is probably Tendulkar's most naturalistic play, as Arundhati Banerjee puts it. The play grew around the central character Sakharam, a binder who became the antithesis of the ideal view of his caste, that is Brahmin. As he was treated badly by his orthodox parents he started behaving in the opposite way. He speaks vulgar language drinks liquor smokes cigars and indulges in mechanical Sex. He hates the traditional system of marriage and brings home cast-off Women whom he does not keep with him long. Thus Laxmi is the seventh woman to live with him when he becomes impotent



owing to the presence of Laxmi , he also takes it on his women by kicking Laxmi and by strangling Champa to death. He does not know that he treats his women more cruelly than a cruel husband. Laxmi says :

“It is a year now since I entered this house. I haven't had a single day's rest., whether I'm sick or whether it's a festival day. Nothing but work, work : work all the time. You torture me the whole day, you torture me at night . I'll drop dead one of these days and that will be the end. (146)

She also tells him that hell must be a better place than his house. She objects the presence of Dawood, his friend, into the house and gets beaten by Sakharam and leaves for her cousin's house. Then he gets Champa, the eighth woman to enter his life who has left her husband because of the sadistic torture of her husband, Shinde. Once Champa's husband comes to Sakharam's house and Champa beats him for which Sakharam is greatly shocked. Laxmi' s return makes him impotent and Champa seeks sexual pleasure with Dawood. Laxmi tells Sakharam about Champa's relationship with Dawood, Sakharam strangles Champa to death and feels aghast at his own action. Laxmi tells him to bury her dead body secretly in the house itself. The play shows how exploitation and domestic violence cause self – alienation that make people inhuman and perverted.

Tendulkar's *Kamala* reveals the exploitation of Jaisingh towards his wife Sarita. Jaisingh is a journalist associated with an English daily published by Sheth Singhania. Sarita, his educated wife hails from a village. They live in a small bungalow in a neat locality around Delhi. Kakasaheb is Sarita's uncle who runs a paper in the vernacular and a man of Gandhian principles. Jaisingh is very often out of home and the repeated phone calls to him disturb both Sarita and her uncle. However, Sarita has to note down all the incoming calls and the names of the callers. If she fails to do this, it attracts the displeasure of Jaisingh, leading to domestic discord. She is extremely sensitive to her husband's needs and tastes that makes wonder how an

educated girl, rich enough not to depend on any one, could be so slave –like to her husband. One day he arrives home with Kamala, a village woman, whom he has bought for two hundred and fifty rupees from Bihar. He wishes to present her as an exhibit to prove that flesh – trade is rampant in the remote villages in India. Jaisingh looks forward to the 'Press conference' to prove about the flesh – trade, as he is successful in his mission. Though his reputation as a journalist is admirable, Kakasaheb and his friend Jain have nothing good to say about him. It is observed when Jain says to Sarita :

“This warrior against exploitation in the country is exploiting you. He's made a drudge out of a horse-riding independent girl from a princely house. Bye, lovely bonded labourer” (17).

Sarita is really a lovely bonded labourer, taking note of all phone calls, attending to his physical needs.

Jaisingh is successful to prove the flesh – trade in the press conference to counter the government's allegation that news paper men tell lies. He celebrates the occasion with his friend Jain with drink. Sarita dislikes this. She rejects his desire to go to the bed room and he is enraged and disappointed. Like Kamala, Sarita too functions as a mere pawn in Jaisingh's game of chess. She becomes aware of her condition only when she talks to Kamala who asks her what price Jaisingh has paid for her. She finds no difference between herself and Kamala and her eyes are opened. She realizes that he has been using her as an object to satisfy his physical desires and an object to parade his own status in the capacity of his wife at parties. She feels that he has become a stranger in her life. Jaisingh turns out to be cruel towards his own wife Sarita who is made an object to be paraded as a wife at parties. He is shown as a typical Indian husband, who has no time to spare for his wife assuring her of his affection for her.

Vijay Tendulkar's powerful play, *Ghashiram Kotwal* exposes the theme of exploitation very well. 'Ghashiram kotwal' is appreciated as Tendulkar's 'best work today'. Ghashiram Savaldas, a poor Brahman from Kanauj, comes with his wife and



daughter to Poona for livelihood, becomes a servant in the courtesan, Gulabi's house and accompanies her in her erotic dances. Nana Phadnavis offers him a necklace but Gulabi snatches it and sends him out with the help of her thugs so that he loses both employment and necklace, feels hurt and insulted. When the Peshwa arranges a feast for Brahmans, he is not allowed to go in. When a Brahman yells that his money is stolen, the soldiers beat him severely, mistaking him for the thief. He is greatly suffered by this humiliation. He is put in prison later they throw him out. He decides to take revenge against the people of Poona who hurt and humiliate him. He looks for the best way to persecute the people of Poona. Nana sees Gauri, the daughter of Ghashiram, gets tempted for physical pleasure, but she steals away. Ghashiram though gets angry over Nana, sends his daughter to Nana. As Nana wants her again and again he blackmails Nana and becomes the kotwal of Poona by sacrificing his daughter. Ghashiram starts persecuting the people who have humiliated him before and even the enemies of Nana. He whips the people, arrests and imprisons them and he harasses and punishes them on mere suspicion. He gets them tortured inhumanly and ruthlessly when they do not confess. People complain to Nana, but in vain. He wants his daughter to get married to Nana as she becomes pregnant. Gauri dies in the midwife's crude attempt of abortion and Nana marries another girl. When Ghashiram blames Nana:

"You deceive me, Nanasaheb.
You did this. You took my
child's life. My only child. My
innocent darling... You killed...
Nana replies : " These hands
never killed even an insect. All
merges into the Ganga. Thou
shalt not grieve over what is
gone. The Vedas have said that.
After all, Ghashya, will we live
forever? We too, every one of
us, will leave, Ghashya... This
body is earth, just dirt. You
cannot rely upon it. What
comes, goes. Four handfuls of
ash remain. The body will burn.
No one belongs to anyone. In

the end, only oneself belongs
to oneself. Life is a dance of
four days' charm. One must do
one's duty. That's enough
"(405).

Thus, Ghashiram and his daughter are greatly exploited by Nana. Ghashiram is greatly infuriated, but he can't do anything against Nana. So, he starts murdering people on slightest suspicion. Some die of suffocation in prisons. The punished angry Brahmans go to Nana for justice and he orders for the death of Ghashiram. The angry mob beat him shave his head and killed him.

Tendulkar's significant play *Silence! The Court is in Session* exposes the issue of exploitation where the central character Miss Leela Benare has become a victim in the hands of men who are selfish and brutally ambitious in a mock law court performed by 'The Sonar Moti Tenement progressive Association (Bombay). Other members are the Kashikars, Balu Rokde, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik, Professor Damle and Rawte. Samant, a villager is shocked to know that the school management, where Benare works as a teacher, holds an enquiry against her 'just because of one bit of Slander'. He takes pity on her when she bursts out placing her hand on her swelling stomach. All decide to frame Benare as 'the accused' in the 'mock - trial'. She is made stand in the dock. She is shocked when accused of the crime of infanticide and realizes that she is baited by the male aggressors. Rokde says to sukhatme, the lawyer, that he has seen her in Damle's room. Benare is stunned and accuses them by saying:

"You have deliberately ganged upon me! You've
plotted against me!"(93)

The innocent samant as the witness says that she is refused by Damle into his life. She wants to go out, but the door is locked. Ponkshe tells that she is pregnant and carries poison always with her. Karnik tells that once she fell in love with her maternal uncle and about her unsuccessful attempt of committing suicide. Finally kashikar says as a witness that she is removed from her service by the School Management. She is shocked and tries to swallow poison and karnik throws it away. Finally, Benare confesses about her affair with maternal



uncle but he turned tail and also says how Damle exploited her hero-worship and went away. Kashikar gives verdict that she must destroy the foetus in her womb. She feels intolerable, despair and collapses on the table with sobs.

CONCLUSION

Vijay Tendulkar's main target is human mind and its agitations and sufferings. The play, *Kamala* explains about the woman character, Sarita's radical interrogation of the slavery within marriage. The play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* explores the elements of jealousy, hatred, and hypocrisy in giving false witnesses against the central character, Leela Benare. In *Sakharam Binder*, it is shown how the character Laxmi has been highly exploited both physically and mentally by the main character, Sakharam. The play *Kanyadaan* shows the exploitation done to Jyoti, the main character. In the Play, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the central character Ghashiram and his daughter have been highly exploited by Nana Phadnavis. Vijay Tendulkar is obviously a writer of modern generation to depict the human problems and sufferings in a skilful and realistic manner.

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