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“Gender and Violence in Vijay Tendulkar’s *Sakharam Binder* (1972)”

Abstract

In the developmental procedure of culture and civilization, human beings are divided into men and women. Both of them suppress their impulsiveness and spontaneity and lose the real delight of life by adopting the ways of culture and social norms. Man becomes the head of the family. He controls and presides over all its affairs. He becomes the master that in due course leads to the formation of male biased society that oppresses womankind all over the globe. Vijay Tendulkar in most of his foremost plays presents women as victim. Women’s place is of greatest concern to Vijay Tendulkar because of the abysmal difference that women experience in relation to men. Vijay Tendulkar depicts the diurnal humiliations and abasements that women undergo in this male chauvinist society. This paper is an attempt to expose the tyranny or oppressive nature of Gender in the play *Sakharam Binder* (1972) by Vijay Tendulkar that leads to violence (Physical, Sexual and Psychological) due to social and gender inequality. Tendulkar reveals the dramatic tension among Sakharam and Laxmi and Champa. This play depicts the life in all its nefariousness, ugliness, primitiveness and crudity. It explores the complexities of human nature. This play is a study in human violence, antagonism and terror, in how people try to keep down and oppress one another at the first

opportunity. Moreover, Tendulkar reaches into the depth of physical lust and violence in human beings. Tendulkar depicts violence not only in form of physical cruelty and sexual violence but also tries to explore the real causes and deep-rooted sources, which are responsible for such kind of violence.

Keywords: Power, Violence, Patriarchy, Hypocrisy, Masochism, Man-woman relationship, Marriage, Lust, Inequality, Exploitation

The social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), when applied to the family, provide a conceptual basis for the view that childhood experiences in the family of origin contribute to the risk or vulnerability to commit wife abuse during adulthood. In other words, this perspective postulates a causal link between two variables found to be highly correlated among men: exposure to violence in family of origin and violence toward intimate partners in adulthood.

Vijay Tendulkar deals with harshness, aggression, cruelty and sensuality in most of his plays. We stumble upon harshness, cruelty and aggression inevitably everywhere in the plays of Tendulkar- in the cunning game in the form of a mock-trial in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, sexual lust of the protagonist in *Sakharam Binder*, in the uncouth and atrocious interactions of the members of the family in *The Vultures*. As N.S. Dharan aptly pens in his *The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar*, “all these plays, in fact, are spectacles of harshness, overt or covert”. (107)

While depicting the ire and gall of the young generation, Tendulkar explores human mind and its complexities in all depth and variety. He portrays man-woman relationship in terms of sensuality and violence rather than love and affection. As an anti-romantic playwright, he projects not love but its perversion, not sex but its degradation.

Furthermore, the play *Sakharam Binder* deals with the themes of man-woman relationship, violence, tyranny of gender, sexual, mental, physical and psychological exploitations, frustration, jealousy, masochism and lust of a lower middle-class man, plight of women in patriarchy and hypocrisy prevailed in so-called cultured society. *Sakharam Binder* is a satire on the institution of marriage in context with the condition of woman in the bond of marriage. It is a satire not only on the condition of married women but also on the plight of forsaken or deserted married women in this society.

The play *Sakharam Binder* develops around the central character of Sakharam, a book-binder in a press, who in spite of being a Brahmin, is the antithesis or exact opposite of the broad-spectrum and general idealized conception of a member of that caste. Due to the ill treatment meted out to Sakharam by his father, he ran away from his father's home. The harsh and bitter experiences he had in his life leave him rough and tough. Sakharam is a foul-mouthed man devoid of morality and ethics who picks up abandoned wives, provides them with shelter for his sexual gratification and exploits them as domestic servants. He lives an independent life and never gives way to false obligations and responsibilities. Sakharam may be seen as the product of patriarchal despotism at home in his early childhood and consequently displaces his belligerence, aggression and frustration on his women. He imputes to the institution of marriage to a sacrilegious conventional bond; contrariwise, he craves for whores to fulfill his physical, sexual and personal needs. Sakharam is a psychopath in the play. And violence for a psychopath is a means to cleanse one's self. A psychopath acts to rise above the fear that leads to repressions, even if the fear is of himself, and the action is to murder. He persecutes his women out of necessity in order to purge his violence and aggression for if he cannot pour out his abhorrence, he cannot love and his being is iced up with callous self-hatred for his despondency and cowardice.

*Sakharam Binder* (1972) explores the world of domestic violence and victimization of women by men. In the play, Laxmi and Champa are not individuals but the representative of entire women community who have been exploiting under the utopian opium of family and marriage for eons. Tendulkar, as being a sensitive writer and social being, agitated and revolted against the patriarchal conventions and customs to raise the question of women's sexual exploitation and their miserable plight. For Sakharam, the man-woman relationship is something commercial. He doesn't believe in the institution of marriage. As he says, "It's good thing I'm not a husband. Things are fine the way they are. You get everything you want and yet you're not tied down. If you've had enough, if she's had enough; you can always part. The game is over. Nothing to bother you after that. While it lasts, she has a roof over her head, and you get home-cooked food. That's a cheap way of fixing all your appetites. No need for you to go begging to another's house!" (129)

What is more, Vijay Tendulkar portrays women suffering under the oppression and tyranny of patriarchy and gender bias in his writings. The freedom is hardly given to women. Moreover, the underlying connotation prevalent in Tendulkar's plays to be discussed is that a woman can find a meaningful existence and refuge from disaster only when she unites herself with a man. This consecutively makes her submissive and subservient to the male-dominated society. Tendulkar presents a boorish and rude patriarchy in this play. He exposes the masochism of the lower middle class male through the character of Sakharam, the protagonist of the play.

The words uttered by Laxmi in Act I "A dead hen doesn't fear the fire! Nothing more terrible can happen to me now. I have been through everything in this house... I've never heard a kind word here. Always barking orders. Curses. Oaths. Threatening to throw me out. Kicks and blows. [*Wipes her eyes with the end of the sari.*] There I was in agony after I'd been belted, and all you wanted me to do was laugh. Laugh and laugh again. Here, I am on

the point of death and I'm supposed to laugh. Hell must be better place than this..." (147-48) let the readers witness the miserable condition of a woman; either married or a deserted, in this male-biased society.

The words or metaphors like 'bird' and 'bird's cage' used for women and for their husbands respectively indicate very clearly the marital life of women in this patriarchal society. Moreover, when Champa hardheartedly thrashes Shinde, her own husband, in the presence of Sakharam and Dawood, they are stunned and stupefied by her aggression, offensiveness and violent outbursts. On this act of Champa, Sakharam asks her, "What kind of women are you? Look, what you've done to him! He's your husband. Haven't you a heart? (167)

The question asked by Sakharam to Champa shows, to some extent, the gender stereotypes set by this male-biased society. That is to say that a woman is not supposed to beat her husband and when in the play, Champa beats her husband, Sakharam and Dawood gets shocked. Because, in this patriarchal society, women are supposed be meek, submissive, calm and polite. But Champa is different. She has her own terms and conditions. A woman is called 'Good-for-nothing' if she does not follow the customs and traditions of our society. As Sakharam says for Champa, "Good-for-nothing! Doesn't care for either feasts or fasts. Damn her. Not right for a woman to behave like this." (174)

Sakharam exploits both the women in all possible ways. He tortures them day and night mentally, physically and psychologically. The playwright not only exposes the hypocrisy of society as a whole but also reveals the duality of Sakharam's attitude towards the double standard of the society in general. The playwright exposes the same tendency in the man who does the same shameless things and criticizes others for that. But he somehow justifies himself and his deeds and activities more impressively by condemning their husbands who have done wrong with them earlier because these women are now helpless as

well as homeless. Moreover, when Champa says in Act Three, "Who? Sakharam? He knows only one sort of puja! (179), she is definitely talks about the lustful tendency of Sakharam.

Hence, Patriarchy is something, which cannot be disunited from the structure of Indian society. Almost all the affairs in the Indian society are dominated by males. Furthermore, according to Damie Kurz, 'Patriarchy' is "the system of male power in society." (27) In patriarchal society, men have in fact, more social, economic and political power and status as comparison to women. They consequently consider themselves superior to women and feel at liberty to use their power if it is necessary to uphold dominance in family decision-making. If we talk in the milieu of Indian society, we come to know that women throughout history have never had the right to control their own bodies. However, it is ironically men in our society who have been having the right of determining that women are nothing but basically the creatures of reproduction put on the earth so that men could aver their masculinity over women.

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