

PORTRAYAL OF THE MARGINALIZED IN THE PLAYS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR

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Abstract:

Indian theatre which was only the weapon of revolting against the British imperialism became rather a rationalized form of expression in independent India. The harmonized blend of eastern and western, the impact of London theaters later added the contemporary tinge to the age-old aspects of Indian drama. Indian theatre became a lot more realistic and naturalistic after independence. Historical plays, mythological characters, virtues and vices were not paid much importance instead a whole fresh enunciation was bestowed in new form of Indian theatre - The modern Indian theatre. The present research paper attempts to study marginalization in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar.

Keywords: *Marginalization, plight, revolt.*

The post-modern era seems to be productive for Indian English drama, as it has received impetus from young writers like Mahesh Dattani and, Manjula Padmanabhan. R.K. Dhawan observing the same opines;

Very recently Indian English drama has shot into prominence. Young writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan have infused new life into this branch of writing. Both Dattani and Padmanabhan project stark realism through their plays. Dattani showcases the mean ugly and unhappy aspects of human life. Manjula Padmanabhan on the other hand delineates a dehumanized terrifying world in which mothers sell their sons for the price of rice (Dhawan, 201).

In contemporary Indian drama, one will be able to note a proper blending of western intellectual consciousness and Indian theatrical techniques while dealing with aspirations of the deprived and marginalized sections of the society and depicting the acute problems of contemporary life. Contemporary Indian drama in general deals with historical themes and contemporary issues socio-economic issues, family, marital relations. For instance, in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar yet another well-known contemporary playwright, one can find the expressions of agony, the outcome of greed, selfishness, and the vulnerable positions of women and so on.

In his portrayal of human relations and tensions, Tendulkar depicts the vibrant tendency of egoistical man and equally self-centered society. His primary concern in all the plays selected for study namely *Sakharam Binder, The Vultures, Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Silence! The Court is in Session* is the failure of human relations due man's influence on his fellow men. There is nothing superficial or exaggerated in his depiction of the vital and often violent stages of man in our society today, says C Coelho. Tendulkar, like Dickens writes about the drags, debased, the fringe people, who go against the accepted norms and values of society.

The characters I write about reflect my interest. Besides, it is one thing to be assured of fan security and stage fight against the accepted norms and values and another to fight for the same when cornered altogether. It is the latter that catches my eyes.

Tendulkar's themes are woven around the characters that always the drags 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, following in the line of G.B. Shaw, Ibsen and others. Some of his pet themes included gender inequality, social inequality, political games, alienations, sex and violence and dissociation of the self.

Tendulkar started his career as a journalist and took to writing at an early age and has to his credit thirty full length plays, twenty-four one-act plays, several articles, editorials and plays for children. For almost forty years, he stood as a stalwart in the Indian writings in English. His first work was *Shreemant (The Rich Man)* in 1955.

His *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1961) won Kamala Chattopadhyay Award and Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 1971. His *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972) which is a political play won him international reputation in the 1970s. He was also honored with India's Padma Bhushan awards. Each of his plays is an enigma by itself that sensitizes the readers or the audience to all the beastly as well as redeeming aspects of man-woman relationship. The astonishing range of his plays, be it the victimizations of the individuals by hypocritical society and a play within the play that presents mock trial where one can see a bitter criticism of the life. In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, sexual degeneration and moral collapse of the family in *The Vultures* (1971), sheer bawdiness and bloodiness in *Sakharam Binder* (1972), the issue of class conflict in *Kanyadaan* (1983) or the concept of romantic love with both of its homosexual and heterosexual aspects shows a shocking but genuine complexity of human relationships and is bereft of any moralizing that gives them away open ended feel.

Many of his plays derived inspiration from real life incidents or social upheavals. Most of his plays are realistic in their content and theme.

All of Vijay Tendulkar's plays concentrate on different aspect of the human character and complexity of human relationship. His greatest quality is to simultaneously involve and distance himself from his works. All his works are clearly distinct from each other. He considers himself a writer of plays and film scripts on a wide variety of subjects, not a closet philosopher or a sociologist who has missed his vocation. Over the last few decades, he has scanned the life world of contemporary Indian in order to identify the sources and nature of the violence that has come to pattern it. Even when violence is not ostensibly his theme, it casts its shadow on his characters. It is unjust to read his entire work as a commentary on human violence.

Vijay Tendulkar in all his plays has been voicing the evils in the society of all types, marginalization of gender, caste, the needy, the racially different, the Dalit and others. His plays are gynocentric. The males in his plays are embodiment of hypocrisy, selfishness and treachery.

In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Tendulkar mocks at the law courts, at the human existence and the double standards of society, Violence, cruelty and the different sets of norms prevailing. The play is an attempt to deny the different systems of norms and codes existing for men and women. It also hits at the inability of the courts in sanctioning punishment. The voice of male dominated society is condemned in the play. The last scene of the *Silence! The Court is in Session* clearly shows the condemnation that Tendulkar has for the legal system prevailing. However, the elaborate monologue after a long Silence by Miss Benare is an attempt by the Dramatist to do justice that was denied to Ms. Benare. That Tendulkar gives an opportunity to Miss Benare is an attempt by Tendulkar to show case the atrocities meted out to the marginalized gender by men. He raises many questions about love, sex, marriage and moral values present in the society.

It is an attack on society's hypocrisy. The play also attempts to say that there is no voice that can express the woes of the marginalized gender. Ms. Benare becomes a metaphor of futility of the existence of women in male dominated society. The play is a caustic satire on the social as well legal justice.

This play makes an attempt to show how the marginalization that Tendulkar attempts to portray in his plays, it can be said to include, the marginalization of the non-powerful, the caste politics, the Dalit, the women and in general the not so violent and submissive. Talking about his plays, he has said that there is

little of fiction in them. While admitting that his plays depict his concerns, his tensions and his joys, the intention of his writing plays as he says is to explore humble his life, his thoughts and to strive constantly to discover something in life, though he had always maintained that he had no particular ideology to lean on against. Defending his objective projection of everything he saw, he felt and he experienced Tendulkar, considers himself as a humanist trying to discover the evils in the society and he has been portraying individuals who are fallen, defeated and those who aspire to get something beyond the situation in which they are placed. His mission to understand them is what all his plays are about and to repeat his concern has been the 'other', the suffering and not the 'successful ones', the other who try to catch life beyond living and get lost in the process. For instance, Ramakant in *The Vultures* suffers from impotency and the tolerance and tenacity he displays is what makes Tendulkar portray him.

The woman characters in his plays are the representation of their generation with the exception of Jyoti in *Kanyadaan* and they are neither aggressive nor revolting. She is well within the system, but not even attempting to go out of it. His message for the marginalized women is that they should be determined to liberate themselves. The human situations she has presented can be universal as in Benare in *Silence! The Court is in Session*. In most plays he has stretched the historical situation beyond its confines as in Ghashiram Kotwal. It can be further concluded that Tendulkar's plays are those that deal with contemporary issues and they with his times and the people of his generations, one thing is clear that in his times, the issue of marginalization is voluminous and across many areas of social spectrum of life and thus one can say that Tendulkar's focus is to confront the conflicts that arise out of marginalization in man's struggle for existence. Lakshmi and Champa are unique and they have an indelible impression. They are not just fictional characters. They also prove Tendulkar's competence in probing and portraying the intricacies of female characters.

Tendulkar presents modern man in all his complexities. He portrays life as it is from different angles without trying to moralize, philosophize in any way. All the works contain a latent critique of modern Indian society, mostly middle class and lower middle class though from different angles. The plays then become notable for them in compromising realism, merciless probing of human nature, and candid scrutiny of individual. *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *Sakharam Binder*, *Ghashiram Kotwal* depicts hypocritical and double standard morality of the white collar and lower middle class Maharashtra people. Tendulkar's plays present life in all its ugliness and complexities. The tragedy of a modern individual, evils in power politics greed for money and fame, man-woman relationship etc. are the concerns of his plays. Tendulkar's dramatic world thus can be further concluded that every play is a mirror that reflects the individual's inner world and outer world. His plays also mirror the tendencies of the Indian society namely the male dominance and feminine frailty and that the characters are the victims of circumstances or the society induced marginalization. His plays are realistic and will be alive even in the days to come.

Yet it can be said that Tendulkar plays went beyond all the others in their capacity to deal blow after blow. Tendulkar's depiction of violence and corruption in all spheres of life leading to the marginalization of the society is so realistic that makes one feel that his protagonists stay with you. Amol Palekar is right when he says,

When I look at his plays, the turmoil and questions, I have understood his men through the failures of his women; through the fights...

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