

Women Predicament reflected in the selected plays of Vijay Tendulkar

Vijay Tendulkar is one of those dramatic masters who effectively brought out the reality in the form of drama. With his prolific pen and artistic sense Tendulkar has raised many burning social and political issues in his plays. Some issues have remained unsolved even today and thus he has been acclaimed as well as criticised in the scene of Indian theatre. Women predicament depicted in Vijay Tendulkar's plays is one such issue. Women are depicted as exploited, tortured, marginalized and victimized in his plays. Tendulkar has viewed the changing scenario that the form of drama has evolved to represent the realities of the world. Drama or theatre is thus the most effective form to bring out such issues and find its possible solution. The tradition and purpose with which drama had begun in ancient time has found many changes with the passing of time. Tendulkar's dramatic genius produced new experimental theatre of the time. Tendulkar's voracious reading and his own experiences of communal riots made him so affected towards many social issues. He saw people closely around him and started understanding human psyche from within. Many Indian women writers have tried their hands on various issues of feminism. The present article puts emphasis on feminist concerns in Vijay Tendulkar's plays.

Women empowerment or discussion on women issues has become the talk of the day. We are living in a country where it is said for women since Vedic times, '*yatra naryastu pujiyante ramante tatra devata*'. Do we actually mean it? Is she in a true sense worshipped and respected or she is more neglected and exploited? Since ancient time women have been exploited one or the other way. From Arushi to Jesika and Nirbhaya to Aruna, woman tolerates outrage. A great revolt breaks out for a woman who sacrificed her life performing *johar* before eight hundred years but what about those

women who become victim of brutal act under male dominated society in the contemporary time! In the age of technology and so-called modernity where one talks of empowering women, Vijay Tendulkar represents stark reality of woman scene in Indian society. His women characters are realistic and not imaginary. For the same purpose the present paper puts emphasis on some of the plays of Vijay Tendulkar such as '*Silence! The Court is in Session*'(1967), '*Kamala*'(1981) and '*Kanyadaan*'(1983).

Silence! The Court is in Session deals with the predicament of a woman called Leela Benare who has been put on trial in the court for becoming pregnant without marriage which also depicts the double standard mentality in the society. The play *Kamala* exposes mental torture and physical violence inflicted upon women for the sake of man's passion to acquire fame, appreciation and physical enjoyment. In the same way *Kanyadaan* too enumerates woman's critical condition under the male domination. Women characters in the eyes of Vijay Tendulkar represent distinctive feminine response to patriarchy.

Leela Benare is an individual; self relevant and strong woman. There is a conflict between social taboo and woman's desire. A frank and enthusiastic woman who earns her own living and believes in her own free will is accused for being pregnant before the marriage and such double standard society ruins her character and on the other side the man who made her pregnant is not accused and he is not questioned and put on trial. Her so-called cultured and educated friends like Kashikar, Mrs. Kashikar, Karnik, Sukatme and Ponkshe put her on trial and tortured her in the name of mock trial. Such women of Tendulkar undergo traumatic experiences and become victims of patriarchal social order. When it comes to decide about woman's purity people take the shelter of religious institutions and age old traditions as safeguard. According to this *Bhima* wouldn't have been worshipped as he illegally married *Hidamba* in jungle and had a child named *Ghatotkach*.

The play thus became the centre of general controversy...marked out as rebel against the established values of a fundamentally orthodox society.¹

Just because of her lust for life Benare becomes the victim of a cruel game. Game here has been symbolised for woman's life. Professor Damle who made her pregnant does not even exist in the trial deliberately as if social and moral responsibility is to be carried away only by woman and man has nothing to do with it. He possesses free will to do anything. The change in every walk of life seems to have no effect on the mentality of people towards woman. A film called 'Pink' (2016) expresses such similar view. A

woman who is individual, free willed and frank is considered characterless in the eyes of society. In her ending soliloquy, Benare asserts her own predicament and the silence imposed upon her by the authorities. But still it seems more a justification and not a revolt against the so-called social norms. Here it becomes difficult to assume that a contemporary writer like Vijay Tendulkar not raising the voice against such exploitation. He describes the problem, the predicament but doesn't make his women characters revolt against injustice.

In the very beginning of the play *Kamala*, the character of Sarita explores husband's domination over his wife. Sarita has been described as a devoted wife, serves him and satisfies his each and every need like a slave.

As Jain (Jaisinh's friend) rightly says for Jaisinh (Sarita's husband), "Hero of anti-exploitation campaigns makes slave of wife."²

Kamala as an Adivasi marginalised woman is taken for granted to be humiliated as if she is not a human and can bare anything that comes upon her. Being a marginalised she doesn't have feelings or sentiments as she has come from jungle. In the view of Jaisinh such women are born to endure more and more pain. In Tendulkar's view woman has been treated as a pawn in the hands of a male dominated society. She is considered as a useful object. Like Kamala, Sarita too tolerates oppression. Such pathetic condition of these two women reminds of the slavery of black Africans at the hands of white American masters. Mention of flesh market in this play in Jaisinh's narration where women are sold and bought like materials and objects reflect slavery depicted in Stoves' *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Tendulkar thus reflects that the slavery which was abolished in America in 1900s still exists in India. The women are these slaves and they are bought free but their father pay a big amount to the man who marries her.

Sarita's deep thoughts at the end of the play subjects Tendulkar's women characters to psycho analysis. Sarita as Jaisinh's wife is treated more as an object of sexual pleasure and a slave of her husband than a sensible and intelligent human being. She doesn't have her voice in any decision to be taken for home or family. As Simone de Beauvoir describes in 'The Second Sex' that women are considered as the other sex in the society and not as equal.

In *Kanyadaan* Tendulkar portrays Jyoti as a woman of free will and she marries out of her own will but she gets beaten everyday by her husband. Does marrying out of free will allow a woman to be left to suffer and tolerate husband's brutality? Jyoti's decision to marry Arun depicts her untold amounts of conflicts and struggle. With a very fresh

theme in *Kanyadaan*, Tendulkar depicts woman's life and her being tortured. She has been beaten to the death, her husband kicks on her belly even if she is pregnant and she keeps on tolerating for the sake she had made the decision of marrying him by her own free will. Such endurance of Jyoti proves her inner strength and describes how much a woman can endure and survive. Arun Athavale takes out his revenge and rage towards high castes by torturing Jyoti. She becomes the victim of a dalit man's grudge towards the high caste people. A dalit intellectual but brutal in nature, who was victim once and now has become victimizer feels over joy in beating his wife for the sake of vengeance. The man who talks about injustice and exploitation he suffered in his autobiography brutally tortures his own woman. He takes it all out on Jyoti. To change the society Nath (Jyoti's father who belongs to higher class) chooses his daughter to sacrifice her life. On the other side Seva, Jyoti's mother comes out to be a wiser woman than her husband. She seems to be more thoughtful of the coming difficulties in her daughter's life. Nath in urge to uproot casteism and class distinction from society pushed his own daughter into a sea of misery. Thus Jyoti suffers because of the hypocrisy of men – one her father and the other her feeling less, brutal husband. Again a woman suffers to do good for the society.

Jyoti's dreadful condition finds expression in the words of her mother when she says,

“This man himself exploits my daughter. Like a shameless parasite he lives on my daughter's blood and on top of that he gets drunk and bashes her up. Constantly he taunts her about her caste and about her parents, heaping foul abuse on them for being highborn.”³

The last conversation of Jyoti with her father enumerates her unavoidable condition and uncertainty of her upcoming pains. Tendulkar's women do not fight against injustice that is the other view but it is reality, the utter truth. The reader is left in deep thoughts after reading his plays and he then leaves it to his audience to think over it and expects them to take step ahead for the changing possibilities.

Tendulkar has exposed pathetic condition of women of all kinds either they be a house wife, working woman, high caste, low caste or a prostitute. The one who has the power to bear a child in her womb for nine months and can tolerate the great pain in giving birth is considered as marginalised. Modern Indian theatre has become the terminology of women exploitation and her voice against injustice. Modern theatre is more concerned to look at audiences' point of view. Tendulkar's women explore the existing position of women in contemporary Indian society. His women also comes out of the

playwrights' own experiences and depicts his understanding and sensible eyes towards women. Recently there has been a great outcry and dispute against a Malyali journal for publishing the picture of a model called Gilu Joseph breast feeding on the cover page. A case was held against the editor of the journal as it is believed that the picture provokes sexual arousal and woman's purity is disrupted rather it was put to raise awareness among people. And on the contrary people become blind to see the dirty minded men who consider woman's body taken for granted and actually disrupt her character!

Woman either a celebrity or a lower caste has been exploited in many ways from casting couch to make her an object of selling and buying. Women need to be stronger and gather the courage to expose the ugly side of male domination. It has been found recently that female celebrities are coming in light and courageously talk about casting couch rackets exist in bollywood. That is what Tendulkar wishes all his readers to think about seriously. Woman has been sexually as well as mentally exploited. Such pathetic condition of woman of any caste or creed depicted in Vijay Tendulkar's plays is an alarm for each and every woman to raise her voice strong and clear against exploitation and sexual harassment. Through presenting women predicament and complexity of man's nature Vijay Tendulkar has become a latent critic of modern Indian society.

References:

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Dr. Abhipsa H. Pandya, Department of English, Assistant Professor, S.C. Patel

Institute of Commerce, Dehgam. Dist. – Gandhinagar Ph. No. 7698465636

Email – abhipsapandya14@gmail.com