

Complex human relationship in Vijay Tendulkar's plays

Veena. M.K.

Associate Professor, Dept of English (UG & PG), Sahyadri Arts & Commerce College
Constituent college of Kuvempu University, Shivamogga. 577203 Karnataka, India

Abstract

In the post- independence Indian Theatre, the dramatists focus on man with all his complexities. Their dramas depict our socio-political and cultural life mostly on psychological level. Vijay Tendulkar's plays display piercing insights into human behavior and are intended to expose hypocrisy. Vijay Tendulkar focuses on the **complex human relationship**. Contemporary dramatic writing in India is responsive to the most disturbing but vital strains of present life.

Tendulkar presents modern man in all his complexities in his plays *The Vultures* and *A Friend's story*. He portrays life as it is from different angles. The theme is built on a middle-class milieu, through interactions in a hopelessly divided family. The scenes of violence, the illegitimate sexual relations, and the abusive language shock the sensibility of the conventional audience. The play *A Friend's Story* (1971) deals with a bold theme of lesbianism. The playwright develops the action of the play around the central character of Sumitra through the comments of Bapu whose role is similar to that of Sutradara in Sanskrit plays. The play is open-ended.

Despite man's progress in improving his material condition he has failed to free himself from barbarism of the heart. It is very difficult to define violence, since it is not restricted to a particular area, person, caste, creed, color, class and gender and to particular causes. Violence is a fact of life in present day society. Tendulkar's plays bring the present day issues into Indian drama in these themes – Sexuality, religious tension, and gender issues-while focusing on human relationships and personal and moral choices which are the classic concerns of the world drama.

KEYWORDS: complex human relationship, lesbianism, contemporary theatre, violence.

In the post- independence Indian Theatre, the sense of pessimism is noticed in the dramatic works of Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh and Badal Sircar. They deal with the problems of the contemporary life. They represent life as it is, without trying to moralize or philosophize it in any way. Their plays focus on man with all his complexities. Their dramas depict our socio-political and cultural life mostly on psychological level.

Vijay Dhondopat Tendulkar, (1928 -2008) is one of the most important and influential Indian playwrights of the last five decades and the writer of some critically acclaimed Hindi films. Tendulkar was accused of obscenity and needless violence, crude exhibitionism of sexuality, anti-Brahminism, and historical distortions. Unlike many other Marathi dramatists, Tendulkar does not think in terms of narrative logic; he has a direct dramatic imagination. Though he was a fearless social critic all his life,

Tendulkar's plays were not necessarily polemical. They displayed piercing insights into human behavior and were intended to expose hypocrisy.

Vijay Tendulkar focuses on the *complex human relationship* in his plays *The Vultures* and *A Friend's story*. Tendulkar presents modern man in all his complexities. He portrays life as it is from different angles. The act of writing is an enquiry into the means, the limitations and the possibilities of their medium. Vijay Tendulkar is an exception. His consistent, prolonged engagement with human aggression has made him one of the most distinguished social theorists of violence in the country. His perspective on violence is bifocal in works like, *The Vultures* (staged in 1971; written in 1961). He portrays the negative vision of life, by creating faithless, loveless characters in a hopeless universe. He finds human life nothing but an empty space between birth and death.

The play *The Vultures* (1971) occupies, among his works, the highest place in the nature of violence and sex. The theme is built on a middle-class milieu, through interactions in a hopelessly divided family. Violence and evil tend to become an end in itself. The scenes of violence, the illegitimate sexual relations, and the abusive language shock the sensibility of the conventional audience. Ramakant and Umakant's greed and viciousness, their father's degenerate nature, their sister Manik's gross sensuality—all add up to a naturalistic depiction of those vulture aspects of human character. The beating up of the father by his own children, the two brothers' forcible abortion of their sister's child, shows the fundamental evil inherent in human character. Never has such violence been depicted nor experienced before in the Indian theatre.

The play *A Friend's Story* (1971) deals with a bold theme of lesbianism. The playwright develops the action of the play around the central character of Sumitra through the comments of Bapu whose role is similar to that of Sutradara in Sanskrit plays. The subject of the play is different as well as daring. When Mitra realizes her 'abnormality', she is totally disturbed. She tries to fight her own battle and Bapu is the main support for her. The reaction of the people around her, her friend, her lover, her lover's boyfriend – in fact Mitra's rival, and a boy who is fond of Mitra; show the reactions of the society through representative characters – and then the end, which is inevitable. One day she commits suicide-and succeeds! In the context of the Indian woman's oppression, the suicide would be viewed as a solution to end loneliness according to a male playwright. Though, the play is not about suicide, it raises question about the socio-economic realities of suicide. It can be more accurately viewed as theatrical gesture that comments on a woman's life and people could not remove it from their minds. All these characters in the play create a great tragic experience. The play is open-ended. The audience is left to find out their own remedies for their problems that remain burning issues in all times.

Tendulkar's dramas deal with the problem of loss of home, sexuality, marriage and family. The playwright shows that the characters, who are suffering from identity crisis, tyranny of gender, power, caste, and complex human relationship, eventually end up in loss of home in his plays. Tendulkar's plays bring the present day issues into Indian drama in these themes – Sexuality, religious tension, and gender issues-while focusing on human relationships and personal and moral choices which are the classic concerns of the world drama. In its totality, Tendulkar's plays are rooted in the tradition of urban, realist,

predominantly domestic drama by virtue of their urban settings and preoccupation with contemporary middle-class life. His vivid insight offers us the vision of reality.

His views about violence and the exploiter- exploited relationship as 'natural' and 'eternal' is an indication to the political reality around us. So our playwrights unabashedly continue to depict woman as a part of patriarchal, male-dominated world in which their most glorious status is that of a victim! The concept of gender is developed by feminists to contest the naturalization of sexist- culture. Cultural practice is an essential ingredient of literature and it offers a special insight into human experience, thus enabling us to sharpen our perceptions of social reality.

Like this, contemporary dramatic writing in India has gradually grown responsive to some of the most disturbing but vital strains of contemporary life. The responses undoubtedly vary with the social and artistic background as well as the living experiences of the playwrights. Therefore, they have great divergence of tone, intensity and depth of perception. Through his plays, the playwright takes an ironic and nihilistic look at the violence generated by the process of urbanization which has resulted in the collapse of the moral and ethical values of a society.

Despite man's progress in improving his material condition he has failed to free himself from barbarism of the heart. It is very difficult to define violence, since it is not restricted to a particular area, person, caste, creed, color, class and gender and to particular causes. Violence is a fact of life in present day society. So it can be defined as a general term to describe behavior, which deliberately harms, debases or dehumanizes human beings to damage something by the illegal use of unjustified force. In society, we find oppression/tyranny of gender in different phases.

The writers have shown the concern about possible abuse or the fear of violence compelling and constraining women to behave or not to behave in certain ways. The radical feminists see male violence as a mechanism through which men as a group, as well as individual men, are able to control women and maintain their supremacy. It's not only a result of women's subordination in society but also contributes to the construction of that subordination. So that men benefit from the existence of such a culture of violence because it means that women live in a constant state of intimidation and fear. In fact masculinity is a form of power and, to the extent that it is formulated in opposition to femininity, it enables men to act out this power in the subordination and control. In this sense to become masculine is to become an oppressor. It needs to think through the strategies for how to get men to change and what are the roles and responsibilities of men themselves in this. Feminists definitions of violence use 'power' and 'domination' as the operative constructs to explain male violence within the scope of this definition, tyranny is criminal behaviour, perpetrating fear, misery, injury, sickness and possibly death in the victims. Usually women grow up in a climate of fear and violence.

Thus, Tendulkar provides a platform for some of the most complex and vital issues of our existence, inner and outer. So that his plays can be approached from various points of view, such as psychological, sociological, political, cultural, deterministic, existential, feminist, and Marxist etc.

Hence, the study of Tendulkar's drama makes one to understand the complex human relationship. It insists us to demand a new 'Gender order' in which we can 'fashion new concepts and practices of gender based upon the mutual recognition of similarities and differences between women and men, rather than upon notions of their opposition. Tendulkar's dramas reveal how complex tensions within signification comprise the field where the subject must battle for its identity. People are responsible for shaping their own essential being, for creating their own authentic character. All men and women are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.

References:

1. Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn, (Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism, London: Methuen, 1985)
2. N. S. Dharan, the Plays of Vijay Tendulkar, New Delhi: Creative Books, 1999
3. Bandopadhaya, Samik. Introduction ed. *Collected plays in Translation, Vijay Tendulkar*. New Delhi: OUP, 2003. Print.
4. Manchi Sarat Babu. 1997. Indian Drama Today, New Delhi: Prestige Books.. print
5. V.S. Naipaul, India: A Wounded Civilization, London: Penguin Books, 1979, print.
6. Darshan Trivedi -Studies in Indian Drama in English: "Celebration of Violence in Tendulkar's "the Vultures" Darshan Trivedi" ed. by Amarnath Prasad and Saryug Yadav. Prakash Book depot, Bareilly.
7. A.P. Dani. "Vijay Tendulkar's Gidhade and John Webster's The Dutchess of Malfi qtd in V.M. Madge, 2007, Pencraft International; Delhi.
8. Arundathi Banerjee. *Introduction. Five Plays of Vijay Tendulkar*. Bombay: OUP. 1992. p12-13. print
9. Catherine Thankamma: Women that Patriarchy Created: The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani and Mahasweta Devi. *Theatre India*, November 2000. No. Two.
10. Rohini Hattangady, Appendix III, "note on A Friend's Story", *Collected Plays in Translation*, New Delhi: OUP, 2003, 594.
11. Rustom Barucha *Theatre and the World*. 1990 p.185 print.
12. Manchi Sarat Babu. 1997. Indian Drama Today, New Delhi: Prestige Books. print