

Human Relationship Approach in Vijay Tendulkar's Plays: Ghashiram Kotwal, Kamala, Vultures and Sakharam Binder

Manisha Khatri[#] and Dr. Arun Kumar[^]

[#]Research Scholar, [^]Professor Department of English, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut (UP), India

Accepted 01 Sept 2006, Available online 05 Sept 2006 (Spl.2006 issue)

Abstract

One of the most acclaimed Marathi playwrights Vijay Tendulkar in the Indian Literature in Translation is considered to be the beacon who reviewed the contemporary socio-economic political conditions with an eye of an activist. He has attempted to connect the audience with the issues of society and human life. His plays reflect his experiences his voice and his perspective. With his theatrical and analytical dramatic skills, he tried to expose the disturbing and disgusting situations through which his characters struggle and attempt to live life as per their circumstances. The plays, Ghashiram Kotwal and Kamala, deal with the inherent emotional, instinctual forces that are unmanageable for his characters and they are unable to uplift their identity in crisis, instead they pursue the path that is offbeat in the conventional order of the society. The famous play Vultures portrays the disintegration in family and marital relationship. It throws light on the present socio-economic situations and social upheavals. The play Sakharam Binder deals with the characters and their wish to cope up with the change in environment or surroundings in which they live. This research paper examines the critical gap between individual's need for ideas to solve complex problems and their actual supply of those ideas. The aim of the study is to explore how the characters construct their trajectory of desires and dreams in the material world.

Keywords: Human life, Social forces, Disintegration, Crisis, Critical gaps, Supply of ideas

Introduction

The human life is getting complicated day by day as compared to the capacity to adjust with the hustle and bustle of the day to day urban middle class life. The consequences of such fret and fury have engendered confusion and corruption in negotiating any relationship or business. Human has become susceptible to ingenuity gaps. The contemporary man has lost sense of compassion i.e. to suffer with mental toughness the hostile situations in life. He/ She has become vulnerable to mental restlessness, his capacity to connect with the ups and downs of life has become antithesis to resilience. Humankind is engulfed in looking inside their identity, rather —to see beyond external layers of difference and identify the core oneness we share with everyone on this planet|| (Faisal, Jan. 2016, p.224). Presently a human embraces failure in the journey of life not with a self-healing and self-compassionate purpose, rather opens up his self to world of opportunities and challenges with a diminished capacity to recognize sufferings of others and he/she does not want to empathies with others with concentrated efforts. A critical theorist defines —Ingenuity gap is a metaphor for the human predicament, a metaphor that can be explored and

understood in multitude of ways-analytically, empirically, emotionally and spiritually|| (Dixon, 2001). It is associated with the unexpected problems that constitute barriers in choice making of the individuals per se their wishes and urges. These problems create a critical gap between their need for ideas to solve complex problems and their actual supply of those ideas resulting in critical loopholes. Dixon theorizes- —If our society are to manage their affairs and improve their well-being they will need more ingenuity—that is, more ideas for solving their technical and social problems.|| The nature of problems faced by human beings has become more complex. Their ability to implement solutions does not keep pace with moral quotient, therefore their emotional quotient gets weak and is prone to ingenuity gaps. Such gaps create critical situations in the human lives and give rise to the complicacies that make decision making difficult and make human vulnerable. Human gets exposed to the possibility of being harmed, either physically or emotionally due to such complicacies in life. Much of the complicacies are the outcome of forces that are unchangeable and uncontrollable. The present research paper is an attempt to examine the inner conflicts of human mind and the lives through the selected plays of Vijay Tendulkar. He changed the face of Indian drama in

the second half of twentieth century through his plays. He is considered as a controversial playwright that created an intellectual debate in society. Each of his play gives a unique message and deals with different subject matter. The uniqueness in his subject matter and his art of drama at international level till date is acclaimed. The characters of his plays are the victims of harsh circumstances in modern cultured society. The use of the simple language and the clear dialogues help us to understand the various situations that human beings come across in socio-political structure of the society. Tendulkar states in his Tenth Shri Ram Memorial lecture, —A good play must have characters with their own voice and expression. I do agree that in a certain treatment of an unusual theme or subject, the puppets/puppeteer form can work wonderfully well but not in all plays. A play basically requires living characters who speak their own language in their separate personal style|| (The Play Is The Thing, 48). He gives his readers a clear insight into the complexities of the lives of his individual characters. They reject the conventional values and norms of life. They seek their individual identity according to their will and whims to survive. He visualizes the complex human problems through his characters and their desire to situate themselves in prevailing complicated situations. His plays deal with the instinctive human relationship. All the characters wish to live a free life and they struggle against the unfavorable conditions that they come across at different levels.

The characters of Vijay Tendulkar are totally varied from other playwrights with a broad range of complex behavioural factors. Tendulkar states in an interview with Gouri Ramnarayan, —My characters are much more complex than those of other playwrights or scriptwriters. This complexity itself becomes a problem as it makes them difficult to understand. But I can't forget or leave out the inner contradictions when I develop a character. I am impartial in my acceptance of the good and the bad in them|| (Madge, 173). The communication between the characters develops the plot of the play and depicts varied problems each time the plot leads to unexpected events. They symbolically represent the difficulties faced by them during mental and emotional crisis. All the plays of Tendulkar render the psychological sufferings of the individual and their adjustment with environmental changes. The troubles faced by the characters lead to the violent disturbances. Ironically they wish to resolve such complexities and challenges of life by violation or by way of antithetical notion.

Development of Analyses: Ghashiram Kotwal is a musical historical play based on the machinations of power. It is a two-act play that comprises contemporary politics. It was set in the late eighteenth century. The play presents the inherent features of human life in today's society. It represents the situations of human life and their capability when they are activated by thirst for power. The protagonist of the play, Ghashiram Kotwal comes to seek his fortune to the Pune city. He says to the

Sutradhar, —Fortune. Came to find my fortune. Wife came too and my dear daughter; because of them, God stopped the slaughter. But I'm not a thief|| (GK. Act-1. 18). He acts the role of both- a father and a Kotwal. He is the central character who is obsessed with power that results in the loss of his identity. Tendulkar makes the issue too specific by writing about the current political situations. He comments on the creation of the fiends who cause destruction and brutal acts when their materialistic ends are not fulfilled. He is a typical tragic hero who fails to visualize the approaching death of his daughter.

Ghashiram sacrifices his beloved daughter to secure his post and giving it the utmost priority to obtain power. He unknowingly becomes the victim of the power game and of the tactics of the political leader Nana. The playwright sets the example of political symbols through the selection of his characters. The play exposes the practices used by the politicians to secure their power. The cunningness of Nana is reflected at various levels in the play. Ghashiram refuses Nana's for further meetings with his daughter Gauri, and says —It will not do, Majesty. This is too much. The waters have come up to my chin. Better that we stop before the water rises over my head. Otherwise I will be humiliated all over Poona. What will people say about me?|| (GK Act-1. 27). The strategies for accumulating power cause the doom of the protagonist. Tendulkar attempts to create a new consciousness for the follies of human life with all its passions and conflicts. The play explores the hidden and ambiguous nature of human psyche. Neela Bhalla theorizes in her article Ghashiram Kotwal: Text and Sub-text, —It is futile to try to determine whether Ghashiram is a representative of a humiliated psyche or a class oppressor, manipulated by those above him, or a marginalized human being|| (Madge 142). The human struggle is an on-going process and it is never mentioned directly. These are the circumstances that contrast the human behavior at different situations of life in which an individual try to settle. The play Kamala is a satire on the trading of human as bodies in a democratic country like India. Tendulkar touches the varied problems of life faced by the people in general. He concentrates on the sufferings of the Indian common mass and their endurance to the prevailing troubles at different stages. It is a two-act play in which Jaisingh, the protagonist, is a well-known young journalist. He owns a well-educated modern wife with docile nature who transforms into a mature woman at the end of the play. She is being treated as a mere slave. She blindly follows all the commands and orders of her husband Jaisingh Jadhav. She is supposed to receive all the phone calls of her husband and her failure to perform her duty well turns in Jaisingh's displeasure. She tells Kakasaheb, her uncle, —I have to write down each phone call. That's the way you see it. My husband sees it differently. If I say they didn't tell me their names he gets angry with me for not asking|| (KL. Act-1. 3). She even makes arrangements for her husband's warm welcome when she comes to know of his

arrival to Delhi. She attends to her husband's need with great care that makes us wonder that how a modern educated wife acts like a slave to her husband. Virginia Woolf theorizes on the slave-like tendency of women to their husband as: —Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger..... in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband|| (Woolf, 66). Jaisingh not only treats her wife as a slave, but also exploits Kamala whom he purchases from an auction place. He does it to present her at a press conference and achieves the desired growth and promotion in his profession. His aim is to present the conditions of slum areas and its people before public, but ironically his cunning desires lurk out of his behavior towards Kamala. Both Sarita and Kamala are treated as pawns in Jaisingh's game of chess. The conversation with Kakasaheb reveals the cold storm in Sarita's inner self in these words: —I'll go on feeling it. But at present I'm going to lock all that up in a corner of my mind and forget about it. But a day will come, Kakasaheb, when I will stop being a slave. I'll no longer be an object to be used and thrown away. I'll do what I wish, and no one will rule over me. That day has to come. And I'll pay whatever price I have to pay for it|| (KL. Act-2. 52). Tendulkar deals with the various aspects of human life and the complications faced by human beings. He unveils the critical gap between the need of human beings and the ideas they apply to solve such complexities of life. Jaisingh seeks his professional growth on the one hand and on the other hand his wife always longs for his soft corner based love and affection. Tendulkar asserts in an interview with Gouri Ramnarayan, —The modern woman finds it intolerable when she is not recognized as an individual. It reflects in each and everything the couple does together. The pretext for separation may be a trifle, but feelings have simmered long|| (Madge, 174). All the plays of Tendulkar are the portrayal of the selfish and self centered characters. The play *Vultures* (Gidhade) deals with the degenerated family structure due to the inborn evil tendencies of selfishness, greed, wickedness and violence inherent in human nature. It depicts the vulturine nature of the members who dominates the relations of middle class Pitale family. The play features the combination of the virtue and vices vis-a-vis the three characters Ramakant, Umakant and Manik who cheat one another to extract more money whereas Rama and Rajaninath represent the aspects of goodness. Ramakant, Umakant and Manik follow the footsteps of their father, who too cheated his brother to acquire maximum property. They torture their own father and even beat him to usurp his bank balance in order to spend it on their lavish desires and luxuries. The greedy and selfish nature of Ramakant is visible when he tells his father, —Your property! Your millions! There wasn't even bloody ten

thousand cash for each of us. And this house between us three. Monthly maintenance: one hundred and twenty-five. A bloody circus elephant would've been better off! And the business ... a dead horse! The war finished it off! Even beggars and Brahmins shoved into the sand and lime business. A bloody alms-house! Tenders began to be filled at a loss of thousands. How could we make any profit? Sweating blood day and night. And still crying out for lack of profit!|| (VL. Act-1. Sc-2. 211). The hatred of the sons towards their own father underlines the fundamental inherent evil in the human character. The two brother Ramakant and Umakant cross all the limits of humanity and beat their sister, Manik in anguish when they fail to get money from her lover, the Raja of Hondur. This situation is as similar as to the situation in the play *The Duchess of Malfi*, in which duchess's two brothers intrigue against her illicit relation with low-born status lover, however it is a pretext to get rid of her from their path to get all treasure of her dukedom. Amongst all the members of the Pitale family, Rama is the most innocent and humble woman. She is married to Ramakant who is the eldest son of Pitale. Rajaninath introduces her in the long song in which he narrates the history of last twenty five years of Hari Pitale's house. Everyone in the house scolds her. She gets terribly disturbed by the frequent quarrels in the house. Her husband takes her to different saints even after knowing his inability to impregnate her. Rajaninath being sympathetic to her secretly observes her sufferings that she undergoes in the house.

Tendulkar establishes Rama's identity as a typical traditional Indian Woman. He shows the mental turmoil and trauma of unfulfilled desire of Rama. He depicts the sense of isolation created by her husband's indifferent behavior in her life. All the family members fail to understand her as an individual. It destroys the peace and harmony and basically it is a thrust of psychological sufferings upon her. The untold miseries suffered by her are the examples of human who try to adjust themselves in crucial situations. Maya Pandit in her article, *Representation of Family in Modern Marathi Plays'* opines, —With Gidhade, Tendulkar's vision of the family became more violent. Here he went one step ahead to demonstrate the bestiality and monstrosity of people in a family living in a nauseatingly consumerist world. The family of Ramakant, Umakant, Manik, their father and Uncle and the illegitimate son of their father represent the decomposing state of the family where even the outward façade of decency has evaporated and what remains to be seen is the naked play of desire to possess, own, gain money and destroy another human being|| (Madge, 71). Tendulkar exhibits the inhuman violent nature of human psyche by imploring the tactics of the conventional complicated family relationships. Such relationship lack love and trust and merely exists for fulfillment of the selfish goals. The desire for material advancement turns into cruel behavior towards own kinship. As a result, the characters lack sense of responsibility, bravery, courage and morality.

The play *Sakharam Binder* revolves round a middle-class man Sakharam, born in a Brahmin family. The maltreatment faced by him by his parents at early childhood results in his escape from his house at the eleven years of age. He starts working in a press to earn his living. Sakharam indulges himself in anti-social path and he spends a long period of his life with around fourteen women. He is a man who does not believe in the sacred social norms and institution of marriage. Once Sakharam in a soliloquy speaks about himself —Sakharam Binder has never been afraid of work. I've always fended for myself. See! Never called my own father, Father. And as for my mother, to her I was like the son of a wretched Mahar, a scavenger.

Tendulkar exposes the dominant and masochist character of Sakharam who has no realization of any guilt. He is a womanizer, who for fulfilling his selfish ends uses women and later discards them. The very nature of Sakharam is visible with his indifferent attitude towards each woman he hires. He lives life according to his wishes and enjoys masculine power. He brings home women such as Laxmi and Champa. He treats both of them as mere objects. He regulates them according to his own rules and acts with extreme brutality. When it becomes unbearable for Laxmi, she utters, —You think I am afraid to tell you? How much more can a person bear? It's 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.

Though Laxmi suffers the rude and arrogant behavior of Sakharam, she considers him as her husband and wears mangalsutra to make her identity recognized with his name. She secretly observes fast, but everything goes in vain and she is thrown out of the house. Sakharam is seen with Champa in act two, who is a bold woman. She is a self-respecting and independent woman, still she must submit herself to her master. Sakharam hopes for a change with her arrival. Champa not only misbehaves with him, moreover ignores and overrules his rules. Tendulkar points out that —marriage is an institution in which sexual relationship for a woman is possible only if the self is forgotten in the stupor of alcohol, pleasure is possible only through inflicting pain on the others and 'self-awareness' is nothing but the mute and moron like acceptance of inhuman subordination or supremacy (Burman, 2006).

Conclusion

Tendulkar in all the plays explore the deep-rooted selfish, inherent desires of human nature. The characters in his plays manifest self-pity, instead of self-compassion, hence they in their imperfect human condition become alone, insecure and full of negativity. He projects the complexity of human nature and human character which is unable to grapple with the lowest moments of life in the present times of competitive edge and adverse situations. Each character of Tendulkar is a mixture of strength and

weakness, good and evil. The destructive, unsafe and self-exaggerated nature of human beings have been a matter of thematic concern for many of the playwrights and critics. Shailja Wadikar finds that the individuals in the conscious world are fully equipped with the ideas and they react to such violent social upheavals without giving a thought to moral perspective towards their self and human life. And Tendulkar theatrically presents this brawl with such brevity that the critic comments upon him in these words: —The analytical study of Vijay Tendulkar's plays reveals that the dramatist has a desire to strive for perfection of life like Chekhov, he aims at creating a kind of emotionally refined, integrated and conscious world (Wadikar, 2008). Tendulkar brings into the light the realities that exist in the human life keeping in mind the present socio-cultural structure of the society. The critical situations give rise to the undesired actions that unknowingly traps the human beings and hence results in their moral and instinctual downfall. They attempt to tread on unsocial paths and lose their sensibility and identity. To fulfill the gaps of their required desired, they supply and apply the ideas which they feel suitable to the existing circumstances that sometimes cause disturbances. Consequently the moral degradation and destruction of all the elements relative to their surroundings happen naturally. The characters face dilemma in their lives because of their skeptical, whimsical, idiosyncratic ways to tackle the critical issues. Tendulkar has deep concern for such complex issues which he deals with openness. He has touched on the all the aspects of human tendencies and their inherent behavior. He perceives the human mind artistically, and with theatrical imagination he plays with such ideas dramatically in his subject matter. His conscious and curious mind bifurcate each level of the problem in different segments through his characters. He expresses his emotional views regarding his playwriting career in his Tenth Shri Ram Memorial lecture in these words, —All those who retire get a sentimental farewell. What I like about those years is that they made me grow as a human being. And theatre which was my major concern has contributed to this in a big way. It helped me to analyze life —my own and lives of others. It led me to make newer and newer discoveries in the vast realm of the human mind which still defies all available theories and logic (The Play Is The Thing, 58).

References

- [1]. Burman, R Indulekha. —Man- Woman Relationship in the *Sakharam Binder*. In Tandon, Neeru (Ed). *Perspectives and Challenges in Indian- English Drama*. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2005. Print.
- [2]. Dixon, Thomas Homer. *The Ingenuity Gap*. London: Vintage Publication, 2001. Print.
- [3]. Hoque, Faisal. —*The Path of Endurance*. *Survive to Thrive*. Quoted in *Smart Manager, Jet Wings*. Jan.2005. Print.
- [4]. Madge, V. M. *Vijay Tendulkar's Play: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004. Print.

- [5]. Tendulkar Vijay, —The Play Is The Thing.|| Shree Ram Memorial Lecture. New Delhi: Katha, 2001. Print.
- [6]. Tendulkar, Vijay. Five Plays. Kamala. Trans. Priya Adarkar. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.
- [7]. Tendulkar, Vijay. Five Plays. Sakharam Binder. Trans. Kumud Mehta and Shanta Gokhale. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.
- [8]. Tendulkar, Vijay. Five Plays. The Vultures. Trans. Priya Adarkar. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.
- [9]. Tendulkar, Vijay. Ghashiram Kotwal. Trans. Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliott. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2003. Print.
- [10]. Wadikar, Shailja B. Vijay Tendulkar A Pioneer Playwright. New Delhi: Atlantic publisher and distributors, 2004. Print.
11. Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. London: The Hogarth Press, 1929. Print.