

“DEPICTION OF VIOLENCE”

**PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND VERBAL DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENCE
IN
VIJAY TENDULKAR’S ‘GIDHADE’ (VULTURES) & ‘SHANTATA COURT CHALU
AHE’ (SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION)**

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Abstract

Throughout his career Vijay Tendulkar forces people to see the logic of public and private violence in a hypocrite world of civilized people. Through a combination of form and content his plays offers a radical theatrical experience of different forms of violence. Tendulkar’s plays often depict dimensions of violence, and organized cruelty. Physical, sexual, and verbal dimensions of violence depicted in Vijay Tendulkar’s plays are real accounts of world brutality in general. In Gidhade, Baby, and Sakharam Binder Tendulkar depicts the physical dimensions of violence which contain scenes of snatching, abusing, torture, injury, extermination, madness, trauma, depression, and terror. Tendulkar’s next plays deal specifically with the problem of violence in Hypocrite society. In his Silence the court is in session and Kamala he represents violence through language. Taking Vijay Tendulkar’s plays as a main case this paper explores physical, sexual, and verbal dimensions of violence in his shocking plays “Gidhade” (Vultures) and ‘Shantata Court Chalu Ahe’ (silence! the court is in session).

Key Words: *Vijay Tendulkar, Experiential Theatre, Violence, Cruelty.*

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the most important playwrights of Indian theatre in the last four decades whose plays often depicts the scenes of violence and cruelty. He is considered to be the most controversial Indian playwright of the last four decades, definitely the most radical and stands out as an excellent prototypical figure of Modern Marathi theatre. In the long span time between 1960 and 2000 he wrote 28 full-length plays, 24 one act plays several middles, articles, editorials and 11 plays for children. In his three plays *Gidhade*, *Baby*, and *Sakharam Binder* he shocks audiences with excessive scenes of social and

physical violence. He depicts verbalized violence with the images of violent relationship, torture, abuse, obsessive love, sexual desire, betrayal, humiliation, atrocity, pain and death.

Presenting a vast number of matters fundamental to many aspects of postmodern life and holding up a mirror to the question of violence which characterizes the postmodern condition, Tendulkar's plays confronts people with its experimental theatrics that focuses on violence beneath the civilized people of the society. He started his career as dramatist with his play 'Shrimant' (The Rich Man) in 1955. He not only pioneered the experimental theatre movement in Marathi but also guided it. While talking about contemporary Marathi theatre Dhyaneswar Nadkarni points out:

"Vijay Tendulkar leads the vanguard of the avant-garde theatre that developed as a movement separate from the mainstream. Tendulkar and his colleagues were dissatisfied with the decadent professional theatre that characterized the Thirties and Forties. They wanted to give theatre a new form and therefore experimented with all aspects of it including content, acting, and décor and audience communication."¹

Tendulkar's plays often explore the acts of physical, sexual and verbal dimensions of violence. Violence is only a tool for Tendulkar through which he criticizes the injustices of the world. He is not interested in violence for the sake of violence. Vijay Tendulkar, as a sensitive, sensible and responsible citizen, could not quiet his agitated conscience with his journalistic career. So, he left journalism when he received Nehru Fellowship for the 1973-75. During this period, he travelled extensively throughout India and saw directly all kinds of violence. From this experience, he infers:

"Unlike Communists, I don't think that violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or, for that matter, in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that the human being is born with not that it's bad. Without violence, man would have turned into a vegetable."²

In scrutinizing the corrupted history of human being, Vijay Tendulkar's plays focus on violence as the single most significant aspect of history. Most of his characters are the victims of cruelty and aggression which characterizes the postmodern civilized life. Thus Vijay Tendulkar always has a specific purpose for using violence in his plays. He uses violence as a shock tactic to inspire his audiences not to sit idly by and to take action against the atrocities of life. According to Tendulkar there is no reason for human violence against human in the world. He believes that violence is a natural phenomenon for human as species in the same way as animals. But, In the light of this idea he uses theatre as a think

tank arena where he criticizes and discusses the cycle of meaningless violence and the crimes of humanity.

The play *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1967), made Tendulkar the centre of a general controversy. He had already been called the angry young man of the Marathi theatre. He was considered a rebel against the established values of a fundamentally orthodox society. This play has a play within itself that presents a mock trial. Benare, the central character, is a lady-artist and teacher. She is agile, convivial and a natural lover of life. She wants freedom in and right over her life and refuses to be suffocated by social norms. She says to Samant:

“Who are these people to say what I can or can’t do? My life is my own. I haven’t sold it to anyone for a job! My will is my own.” (58)

Prof. Damle exploits her academic interest to enjoy sex with her. Benare innocently becomes victim to him who betrays her. She becomes pregnant and requests Rokde and Ponshe to marry and save her from ignominy. But they are neither compassionate nor courageous to help her. Benare ridicules their diffidence and hypocrisy. She is frank and open. She exposes the hypocrisy of people and laughs at their flaws. So the other members of the troupe who fail in life miserably feel more humiliated by the ridicule of Benare than their failure and decide to take it on her in the name of mock-trial where they expose her personal life and hurt her deeply. They do not find fault with Damle who is the real culprit and who caused the misery in her life. In her agony, she who loves life so much feels utterly desperate and says:

“Milord, life is a very dreadful thing. Life must be hanged. Najeevan jeevanamarhati. ‘Life is not worthy of life.’ Hold an enquiry against life. Sack it from its job.” (116)

The play, thus, exposes the inhuman violence in its verbal form of the patriarchal society against women. The play depicts the mental violence placed in our society. The violence in the play can be seen as deconstructing the stereotype of the Indian woman as Devi or Shakti: it demonstrates that there is no ideal Indian woman as such, apart from the real flesh-and-blood women. The identity of a woman is socially and culturally constructed, and the constructions serve certain socio-political and personal ends. Leela Benare is the example of a woman who, though antagonistic to socially acceptable codes of morality, appears to be an idealist and hence she was accused by surrounding people violently.

The Vultures (Gidhade) was actually written 14 years before it was produced (1970) and published (1971). It shocked the conservative sections of Marathi people with its naturalistic display of cupidity, sex and violence. It shows how the capitalistic values destroy human love and relations. Hari Pitale cheats his own brother in business and earns great wealth. His children Ramakant, Umakant and Manik inherit his egocentric nature. For money they do not hesitate to kill one another. Manik expresses her fear of being killed to her sister-in-law while telling her why the door of her room is shut:

“So I should leave it open, should I? So you can come and strangle me, all of you? It’s because I take care that I’ve survived in the house! Think it’s human beings who live here? The door was shut, says she!”²

She, later, gives an instance to support her fear: “When I had typhoid last year, far from looking after me, you’d all plotted to put poison in medicine!” (208) Hari Pitale also expresses his disgust for his selfish children:

“It’ll die. It’ll be a release! They’re all waiting for it. But I’m your own father, after all. If I die, I’ll become a ghost. I’ll sit on your chest I won’t let enjoy a rupee of it. I earned it all. Now, These wolves, these bullies!” (209)

Ramakant, Umakant and Manik torture their own father in name of a fake fight among themselves. They succeed in getting the bank balance of their father and soon spend it on liquor and other luxuries. Ramakant and Umakant try to blackmail the lover of their own pregnant sister. They break her leg in order to prevent her from intimating her lover about their blackmailing. When they learn about her lover’s death, they kick on her belly hard and abort her foetus. Rajaninath, the natural son of Hari Pitale and Rama, the wife of Ramakant, are the only doves in that house of vultures. Frightened by his own legitimate sons, Hari Pitale requests Rajaninath to help him teach his sons a lesson:

“I am telling you. I can’t endure this, Rajani, Nor would you. This g must be changed. Not by anyone else. By us ... I’ve made a new will. A back dated one. I’ve got hold of a lawyer for the seal, too. In this will, I’ve divided the whole estate between you and Manik.... Teach those pimps a lesson. Let them go and beg, either one of them! We’ll rub up writs and slam ’em with ’em’. Eh’ once this much is done, I can close my eyes in peace.” (259-60)

Rama feels more than vexed with her husband who becomes impotent with excessive drinking and who takes her to several doctors and saints. So, while pouring out her agony, she says to Rajaninath:

“It s not the fault of doctors, of learned men, of saints and sages! It s not even my fault! This womb’s healthy and sound, I swear it! I was born to become a mother. This soil’s rich. It’s hungry. But the seed won’t take root.

If the seed's soaked in poison, If it's weak, feeble, lifeless, devoid of virtue - then why blame the soil" (241)

He makes love to her and she yields to him as if she were under a spell. She, thus, becomes pregnant. Her husband is happy about his wife's pregnancy. She suffocated in that house of vultures and begs him to consider the change of their residence. But he rejects to see the wisdom of her request owing to his male chauvinism and cupidity. Finally he aborts the foetus of his wife with physical violence when Umakant tells him that his wife committed adultery with Rajaninath. Rajaninath is a poet and comments on the incidents and the people. Thus he like Prannarayan in Encounter in Umbugland functions both as a character and chorus. The play shows how the greed for money in the capitalistic society makes people cruel, inhuman and loveless.

Both of the above mentioned plays are different from each other. In 'Silence! Court is in session' all people gathered in the room are not connected with blood relations but in 'Gidhade' all are connected with blood line. But we can see that the violence of selfishness, violence of hate, violence of oppression are not depends on any kind of relationship. It only reflects the basic instincts of the primitive human. As Hogie Wyckoff writes:

"As women and men we are socialized to develop certain parts of personalities while suppressing development of other parts. This programming promotes a predetermined, stilted, and repetitive way of acting life"³

In this process a basic instinct of violence is subjugated by process of culturalisation. So called sophisticated behavior is occurred due to culture not due to nature. Violence is never deleted in terms of nature in human being. It has only suppressed by forceful process of morality and religiousness. Tendulkar perceives the realities of human society and reacts to them as a sensitive and sensible human being and writes about them in his plays as a responsible writer.

He deals with gender inequality, social inequality, power games, false consciousness, with the tools of sex and violence in his plays. In his paper on Vijay Tendulkar and Athol Fugard, C. Coelho observes:

"In his portrayal of human relations and tensions, Tendulkar depicts the violent tendency of egotistical man and equally self-centered society. He liberated Marathi stage from the tyranny of conventional theatre with its

mild doses of social and political satire for purpose of pure entertainment. There is nothing superficial or exaggerated in his depiction of the vital and often violent stages of man in our society today.”⁴

If we observe the statement given by Tendulkar himself about his writing process, we can slightly correct the part of “pure entertainment” in C. Coelho’s quote. Tendulkar tells how he goes about writing his plays” In his portrayal of human relations and tensions, Tendulkar depicts the violent tendency of egotistical man and equally self-centered society. He liberated Marathi stage from the tyranny of conventional theatre with its mild doses of social and political satire for the purpose of pure entertainment” there are two corrections regarding this statement, one is the ‘doses’ are not mild, and as we know so many controversy and thunderstorm are created as a result of the after effects of the plays of Tendulkar. Another one correction is though his plays presented through commercial theatre artiste and get success but Tendulkar never writes for the sack of pure entertainment.

In short, Different forms of violence which beneath the society’s moral structure and Tendulkar’s curiosity towards it, presents us two great plays Shantata Court Chalu Ahe (Silence the Court is in Session) and Gidhade (Vultures), which are immense illustration of depiction of Violence in different forms.

References:

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