

**Feminine and Feminist Sensibilities in the Select Plays of  
Vijay Tendulkar**

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**Abstract**

The present research is an immense endeavour to explore feminine and feminist sensibilities in the select plays of Vijay Tendulkar. It attempts to find out the place and position of women besides the root causes of gender inequality in the male dominated social structure. It is a minute study of weak and strong female characters who lose their identity and freedom for the sake of their male counterparts and for so called social conventions. Furthermore, it shows a sordid picture of patriarchal social structure, its hallow moral standards, the gloomy facet of middle class life in the context of contemporary India where women undergo a series of sufferings and age-old tortures. It truly underlines the worst and obscure sensibilities of women in the light of several past centuries. Also it projects women's efforts in order to fulfill their desire for uplifting from the burdens of customs and norms. This study endeavours to analyse the psychological problems, dilemmas, conflicts and a series of sufferings and tortures of women at various levels in the light of select plays. It also concerns with women's striving for survival with respect and honour, their demand of freedom, dignity, equal rights and the perfection.

**Keywords-** Feminine, Feminist, Inequality, Domination, Quest of Entity and Mute Protest.

Drama is one of the most preferred forms of artistic expression. It is the harmonious blending of verses, folklores, melody, dancing art and action. It is a delightful source of entertainment, a splendid form of visual art as well as the most appealing medium of instructions. It is designed for the performance on the stage where the actors play role accordingly and with uttering the written dialogue. In this regards, B. Prasad remarks, "*Drama is a composite art, in which the author, the actor and the stage manager all combine to produce the total effect.*" Being a performing art, drama might have a distinctly religious origin. Perhaps the descent of drama might be deep-rooted in the religion. All over the world, the development of dramatic arts were mostly concerned with religious ceremonies. It is significant to mention that Drama and Poetry are considered as the foremost legendary forms rising from the ancient Greek culture. Plato viewed poetry in his *The Republic* while Aristotle glorified dramatic art and its

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principles in his *Poetics*. Originally, the term drama derived from Greek word meaning “action” or “to act” or “to do”. It can be defined as the specific mode of fiction represented in performance. William J. Long rightly remarks that “*Drama is an old story told in the eye, a story put into action by living performers.*” Drama seems different from other literary genres because it rarely intends for reading but exclusively designed for performance. In a play, the playwright presents the human emotions and sentiments in the collaboration of action. In this context, M. H. Abrams and G. G. Harpham argued “*Drama is the form of composition designed for performance in the theater.*” In brief, drama is a mode of fictional representation through dialogue and performance. Drama is a composition in verse or prose presenting a story in dialogue. It also consists a variety of dramatic devices like dramatic skill, stage direction, plot-construction, characterisation, chorus, music, acting etc.

The first and foremost object of drama is to please and instruct the spectators. It has to grasp the interest of diverse age-groups with its universal appeal. In other words, it should have a huge acquaintance with taste and temperaments of the audience with a depth of awareness. In addition, it should be realistic in nature which demonstrate present day scenario in artistic manner along with the trace of the annals of past. English drama gradually developed from the Miracle to Mystery plays, continuously from Morality to interlude and finally appeared in the form the regular drama. Tragedy and comedy are the most appealing sorts of drama. The former deals with the gloomy and serious things while the latter deals with comic and cheerful events of life. Thus, a play in order to communicate the complete living dramatic experience needs a real theatre and live audience.

India has glorious legacy of drama right from the ancient era. The origin of Indian drama can be explored back in the Vedic Period. It is much older than English drama. Before thousands of years Indian drama was at its culmination. The journey of Indian drama started with the Sanskrit plays, among which *Natyashastra* is the oldest text of the theory of the drama. India has affluent evidences of dramatic art in the form of the holy scriptures like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Indian drama in English was started by Krishna Mohan Banerji with his work *The Persecuted* (1837). In the further time, the tradition of Indian drama in English was flourished by the eminent Indian playwright like Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt. It made quite progress in the age of Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. A cumulative theatrical tradition in the history of Indian drama in English was developed by prominent Indian dramatists like Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sirkar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad. This troupe of playwrights prepared a fertile background of contemporary Indian English theatre and skillfully presented the socio-cultural, political, social problems and conflicts in their plays.

Vijay Tendulkar, a subtle observer of Indian social reality, is regarded as one of the most influential playwrights of India with his unique creativity and fine sensibility. He offered a new content and form to Indian theatre with his social commentaries on the contemporary issues. Tendulkar portrays feminine and feminist sensibilities, the physical

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suffering and mental agonies of women's characters with the hostile surroundings in which they live. While presenting the complexities of women's life, he shows the vast emptiness of value system found in Indian society where woman has nothing on her credit except rearing children and cooking food. He treats women characters with understanding and sympathy. In his plays, his women creatures belong to the lower and middle classes who acts vital roles. His plays are absolutely realistic in its themes and subjects. He uncloses the innermost feelings and emotions of women in the form of soliloquies. Somewhere he introduce them as teacher like Leela Benare, the house wife like Sarita, the slave like Kamala, well-educated girl like Jyoti. His women characters seem more or less feminine and feminist by temperament. He exposes the diverse nature of women in his plays. They appears as conservative, self-sacrificing, illiterate, sufferers, stubborn, orthodox as well as clever, rebellious, aggressive, bold, self-assertive, aware and fully sensitive.

The select plays represent an environment of social structure with feminine and feminist facets of women's personality. Some of them look silent sufferers of intrigue, hypocrisy, greed and brutality of male dominated society while some of them rarely appear as rebellious, bold, revolutionary and courageous in nature. They rarely raise their voice against injustice, gender inequality and gender based exploitation. The collective efforts of Tendulkar genuinely attempts to study and explore the root cause of gender inequality in the male dominance. Furthermost, his plays underlines the spirit of women for individual rights, respect, independent life, self-identity and emancipation from agonies of life-long tortures.

In his *Silence! The Court Is in Session*, a stage-worthy play, he depicts a woman named Leela Benare who dared to oppose the socio-moral code of sexuality framed by men in order to control the body of women. It is significant to appreciate Leela Benare's feminist sensibility, her voice of protest against male hegemony and her mute demand of gender justice. The focal point of play lies in struggle between Leela Benare and her antagonists headed by the orthodox Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar and their associates. She dared to fall in love of Prof. Damle but couldn't dare to uncover her pregnancy, seduced as teenager by her own maternal uncle and betrayed by her beloved Prof. Damle. In this play, Benare has both feminine and feminist sensibilities. Tendulkar also represents the orthodox cult of Mrs. Kashikar's personality. She imbibes age-old customs and norms of patriarchy and carry its as the moral conduct of society. Mrs. Kashikar is a sole representative of feminine sensibility in this play who herself stands against Benare. The female protagonist is criticized by her companions as '*a canker on the body of society*' because of her unwed motherhood. The whole play revolves around Benare's desperately fights against a middle class oppressive power structure.

*Sakharam Binder*, an explosive play in order to its subject, language and content, is considered as one of Tendulkar's most controversial plays. It is Tendulkar who presents the views of male-dominated society of looking towards women. He also focuses on the man woman relationship in a lower middle class society. It is a sordid criticism on fixed notions

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about morality, marriage institute and sex particularly in the middle class society. It is the manifesto of the exploitation of women at all possible levels; at family level, at the society level, psychological and also at physical level. The character of Laxmi, feminine creation of Tendulkar, is more than submissive and morally aware. Laxmi has surrendered herself totally to Sakharam Binder. She has nothing than the skeleton of her body. She is obliged to follow his instructions. She looks very timid even to answer his basic questions. Sakharam is cruel and perverted in exploiting this poor lady who agrees with him unwillingly. Laxmi, an orthodox woman who believe in religion, has not any voice of protest nor any enthusiasm of being self-assertive. On the other hand, Tendulkar depicts Champa, a quite feminist creation, as bold and aggressive woman who does not feel morality is important in life. Champa has the expression of being very frank, flat nature. She has her own concept about sexual pleasure and is objectively finds out 'maleness' in a man. Her language is loud, rebellious and thunderous. Thus, the play depicts women Laxmi and Champa vice versa. Laxmi as a victim with no voice and no entity while Champa though oppressed but with voice of rebel.

Tendulkar, in his realistic play *Kamala*, draws the sketch of an innocence slave girl named Kamala, a feminine face, who bought from a rural flesh market and presented at a press conference. Here, Jay Singh Jadhav treats women as an object. He purchased Kamala for two hundred and fifty rupees only to get the promotion in his professional life. Kamala, an Adivasi woman, appear as a silent sufferer and innocent in the play. It is through Sarita Tendulkar expose men's dominance over women. She is wife of Jay Singh Jadhav. At the end of the play Sarita acknowledge she is nothing but a kind of sophisticated slave for her husband with all luxurious wants without any entity. It is necessary to glorify Sarita's zeal for upliftment and emancipation from the agonies of high class society and her mere attempt to come out from such a water tight compartment but she did nothing. Both Kamala and Sarita are feminine creations of Tendulkar.

The image of women in Indian society is still obscure and cursed because females are considered as sub-marginalized. Tendulkar's *Kanyadaan*, the title itself refers woman as giving gift to someone, is the most controversial play, explores the characters who becoming victims of their own sham and hallow idealism. Jyoti, the representative of a new woman with her feminist sensibility, whose happy life coverts into curse after her marriage with a Dalit named Arun Aathvale. She is represented as the most liberal, delicate and broad-minded who believes in her own will and intuition at the beginning of the play but in her further life she lost her voice and remains oppressed by her own man. She often abandons the restrictions of caste, race, culture and religion. Her decision of getting inter-caste marriage makes her more realistic and open-minded. The play underlines the conflict between two different sections and their sham and hallow ideologies.

### Conclusion

In these select plays we can see women's suppression, domestic and sexual violence, discrimination, secondary position as well as their guts to come out from the

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sufferings, their mute protest to social customs and voice for equal rights. We have seen how the hostile surroundings, age-old conventions and male dominance made women more feeble and futile. Simone de Beauvoir, in this regard, rightly stated in her *The Second Sex*, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". The sole concern of select works is to make aware about women's status in society and appealing to uplift and emancipate them from the burdens of mental slavery. The significance of the study is examining the voices of women and their influences on the development of society. The proposed study will definitely takes immense efforts in understanding the role of women in shaping the future of Nation. The present study would be helpful to create awareness to reconstruct the healthy relationship between men and women. It exhibits the vivid picture of Indian society where woman worships as Deity and somewhere treats as worst than animal vice-versa. Thus, the sole significance of this research is to focus on women's struggle for self.

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