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2019-2020

# APOORV KNOWLEDGE

International Journal of  
Multidisciplinary Research



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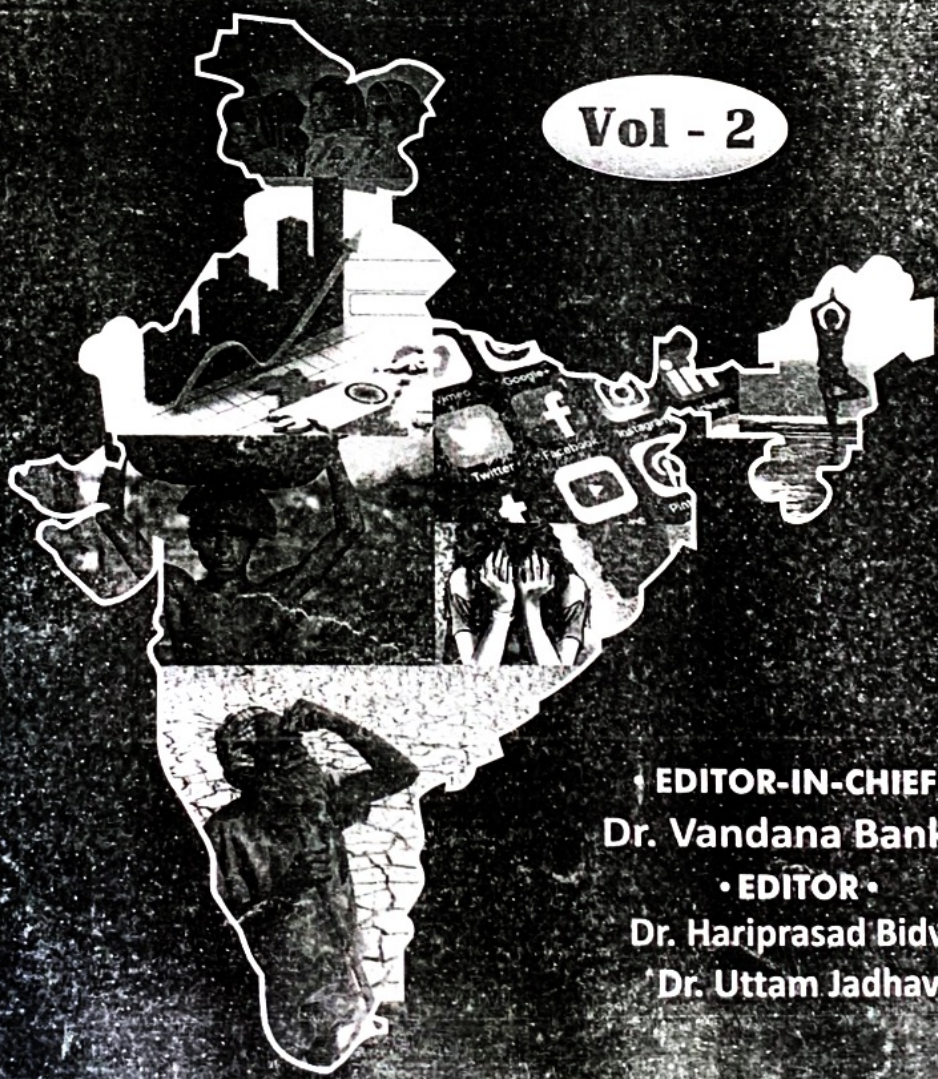
Shri. Dnyaneshwar Shikshan Sanstha's



# SHIVCHHATRAPATI ARTS COLLEGE

Pachod, Tq. Paithan, Dist. Aurangabad (M.S.)

Vol - 2



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## Reflection of Man-Woman Relationship in Vijay Tendulkar's play 'Sakharam Binder'

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### ABSTRACT

*Padmabhushan Vijay Tendulkar, the celebrity author and playwright of Marathi theatre and who began writing in the 50's as a part of a progressive theatre movement, has been on the vanguard of Indian theatre almost for four decades. It was the late sixties, Indian literature threw up a few star performers amongst Indian playwrights. They were Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar and Vijay Tendulkar. They were all excellent craftsmen. The themes of Tendulkar's plays, especially those translated into English, portray in unpretentious manner, violence as a part of human life. Through various themes taken from real-life experiences, he fights for social justice and it is a never ending fight. It is this touch of reality that makes his plays lively. Tendulkar, being a multi-faceted creative genius, has ranged his plays thematically for the alienation of the modern individual to contemporary politics, from social-individual tensions to the complexities of human character, from exploration of man-woman relationship to reinterpretations of historical episodes. The themes of gender relation, sexual norms, institution of marriage and issues of conventional moralities have been featured prominently in his great masterpieces like-silence! The court is in session (1968,) Gidhade (1971), Sakharam Binder (1972) etc have brought a revolution on the Marathi stage as well as in contemporary Indian theatre. The present paper, therefore, has attempted to understand the man-woman relationship in 'Sakharam Binder.'*

**Keywords :** Man, Woman, Relationship, Tendulkar

In his play 'Sakharam Binder' (1972) Tendulkar explores with great objectivity the complications in human nature- two necessary components of which are sex and violence. In an extensive and close interview with Shukla Chatterjee Tendulkar once opined openly how he got into portraying violence in most of his plays. He prefers to call violence 'aggression' which is a part of human existence. Every human mind, accordingly, is a complex and there are many contradictions in each mind.

In 'Sakharam Binder' he depicts the ideology of the middleclass man with all his complexities, envy and covetousness. The play has three acts : the first act deals with the relationship of Laxmi-Sakharam, the second one that of Champa-Sakharam, and the last one, that of Laxmi-Sakharam-Champa. As the title suggests, the play revolves around the character of Sakharam, the protagonist and his curious life-style. The protagonist is a man devoid of ethics and morality, and does not believe in the institution of marriage. So he remains unmarried all through his life. He makes the rule of his house clear from the outset, "This is not royal palace. It is Sakharam Binder's house". However, he arranges a contractual relationship with a helpless, deserted, discarded women, castoff wives in the society not with a view to improving her lot but to exploiting her further by fulfilling his sexual lust. Wine and women are his central concerns. The relationship is a kind of game where the woman has to follow the rules unquestionably. The play opens when he brings Laxmi to his house, the seventh one in the series of

his women. Here, he tells a frightened Laxmi gloatingly, "I have been like this right from birth. Born naked I was. My mother used to say... he is a Maher born in Brahmin home". This opening harangue, according to V.M Madge, "is a crucial part of the text in that it not only tells what sort of a man Sakharam is but also contains seeds of dichotomy in his character, of which he is blissfully unaware." He further tells Laxmi how he expects her to behave. "I like everything in order here. Won't put up with slip shod ways. If you are careless, I shall show the door, I am the master here. A house must be a home, you understand."

Sakharam appears to be a man who is true to himself and to his life. Outwardly, he shows that he is a saviour of women but the fact is that, he is an epicurean a self-centred pleasure-seeker. What he develops in his so-called house is a victim-victimizer relationship, which is a worse for the woman who suffers more with Sakharam than with her husband before. He remains oblivious to the emotional and moral implications of all his exploits. He justifies all his acts through claims of modern, unconventional thinking, and comes up with hollow arguments meant in fact to enslave women. Paradoxically, some of the women to whom Sakharam had enslaved badly want freedom from their enslavement.

This contractual relationship based on mutual convenience; everyone has the same right to break this contract anytime. The woman has to perform all the duties like a sincere, obedient, faithful wife and in return, he gives her food, clothing, and shelter.

And he is ready to throw each of them out when there remains nothing womanly about her. Therefore, exploitation, oppression, suppression, and subjugation of women are the characteristic features of the relationship that exists between Sakharam and his woman. Considering these women as domestic servants and sex partners, he rules his house as tin-pot tyrant. He tells each woman that she is free to leave whenever she likes. He will even give her a sari, 50 rupees and a ticket for her departure. "The game is over" are his words when he gets bored in this relationship. A new one comes on the heels of each former woman's departure. He, even, does not bother himself to think what will happen to them afterwards.

As the play progresses the unconventionality of the protagonist is established. The dramatist depicts him as the representative of the angry and frustrated post-war youth. The extremity is shown when he condemns his women and the world at large, explicitly and implicitly himself, too. The play's main conflict is set in motion when Laxmi returns after Sakharam sent her packing, and convinces Champa to let her stay. The playwright attempts to highlight women's wisdom and power on affecting men's behavior. Laxmi is depicted as an obedient woman who can affect Sakharam's mind and let him follow her words. The characters of Laxmi and Sakharam are different from each other in temperament so their relationship remains very short-lived. Laxmi is very kind, cool and tender hearted. Sakharam is very aggressive, violent and passionate. Laxmi falls short to fulfill his excessive physical lust and Sakharam remains blind to her expectations. Consequently, both of them cannot satisfy each other either physically or psychologically. There is no sharing, no harmony in their relationship. Ultimately, they part company, saying goodbye to each other in a very cordial manner.

Champa's appearance, behavior, dialogues and even her name indicate that she is whimsical by nature. All good, desirable changes in Sakharam's life in his association with Laxmi, come to an end with Champa's arrival. A religious, responsible man emerges as a lewd, sensual drunkard. The relationship that exists between Sakharam and Champa is totally contradictory to the previous one that with Lxmi. Laxmi accepts Sakharam almost as a husband and, therefore, remains faithful to him and

submits herself to him willingly. Champa, on the other hand, accepts Sakharam merely as her ma in sheer helplessness and for not having an alternative. She has no option but to share bed with him. However, for that, she has to reluctantly be herself with an alcoholic drink, of course. Through her character the playwright has represented a bold stout woman. She is a rebel against the male dominated society. She challenges the conventional norms and values regarding man-woman relationship. The dramatist also highlights the lack of sisterhood among women by representing the planned conspiracy between Laxmi and Champa's husband. Here, Laxmi proves that how a woman can be the enemy of other women and can destroy each other. Champa's murder at the hands of Sakharam is an instance of it. Infact, it is champa who persuades Sakharam to give shelter to Laxmi after her return.

Thus, the play *Sakharam Binder* shows the dramatist's acute observation of life and society. It is based on the real-life situation. The women characters in the play appear to be the mute witnesses of womankind's endless sufferings in male-dominated society. Woman is always oppressed and occupied an inferior status in the society. The downfall of Sakharam is because of his ignorance of all social norms. In addition, he does not try to treat a woman as human being who can commit mistake, she has flaws, limitations, feeling and heart also. Through his women characters, Tendulkar tries to delineate gender issues. The patriarchal system makes woman the weaker and dependent.

At the close of the play all the major characters namely Sakharam, Laxmi, Champa and Shinde appear to be changed drastically. The play is open ended in the sense that after the murder of Champa, it is not clear what would be the plight of Laxmi after the death of Champa. Tendulkar leaves a chance for the audience and readers to play with the possibilities and draw their own conclusions. To sum up we can say that exploitation, oppression, suppression, and subjugation of woman are the characteristic features of the relationship that exists between male and female characters in this play.

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