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HARSH REALITY OF CHAUVINISTIC BIASED SOCIETY: WOMEN VICTIMIZED AS SEX
OBJECTS IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *SAKHARAM BINDER*

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ABSTRACT

Women is the base of human existence. In ancient vedic period people used to worship and respect every woman but with the change in time people's attitude towards women has also been changed. In the modern society women is not worshipped. She is marginalized and seen with vulgar sight. She is victimized as an object of sex, as an object to fulfil man's lust. She is used and thrown these days and her emotions are crushed in this male dominated society. It has biased rules. This paper is an effort to present and highlight the same social problem by deep study of Vijay Tendulkar's play *Sakharam Binder*.

Keywords: victimization, sex onjects, chauvinistic biased society, marginalization, patriarchic world.

Amongst all the literary forms, drama is a very useful and important medium of expression which acts as a vehicle to attract the reader's attention towards the burning issues in society. Gender discrimination is a widely explored topic of the modern theatre,hence Indian as well as western dramatists have used the stage to expose this gender discrimination in male dominated patriarchial society and how women fight against this injustice. This paper proposes to highlight the issue of margialization of women in Vijay Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder*.

"Woman is an inferior other to the man as the native is to the colonist."(Sengupta, 217)

Woman since ages has been used and utilized by male patriarchial society to fulfil its selfish lustful desires. For men, women are mere objects to satisfy their physical and sexual cravings. *Sakharam Binder* is a play dealing with the topic of sexual exploitation of women and about women being treated and objectified as sex dolls without any mind or feeling of their own.

Smita Paul rightly remarks in her book *Theatre of Power*, "The women characters in Tendulkar's theatre undergo a series of sufferings and tortures as the victims of the hegemonic power-structure. In male-dominated theatre-world they are constantly being 'other-ed'."(Paul,2010)

The play *Sakharam Binder* explores complexities of human nature where man – woman relationship is presented in terms of sensuality and violence rather than love and affection. The play is divided into three acts. The first act shows the relationship of Sakharam with Laxmi, the second act presents Champa – Sakharam relation and in the third act the relationship amongst Laxmi, Sakharam and Champa is highlighted. The protagonist of the play, Sakharam is the pivot of the whole situation.

Shailja B Wadikar rightly quotes him,"a foul mouthed womanizer". (Wadikar,2008)

Sakharam is against the pre established morals and ethics of society. He is against the institution of marriage and prefers to stay with different women in a live in kind of relationship. He pretends to be the savior of women, but actually he utilizes the helplessness of women to fulfil his lustful desires. Though he criticizes married life, he develops such relation with the women which brings more sufferings to them with Sakharam than with their earlier husbands. He brings the deserted and helpless women to his house and allows them to stay in the house on the conditions and rules made by him. Sakharam is the spokesman of the angry and frustrated modern generation. He lashes out at his women and does not care about the world but wants the world, basically his woman to care for him.

Shailaja Wadikar observes, "The want of love has generated a kind of fierceness in Sakharam's temperament. As a result, he turns into a masochist who seeks pleasure in inflicting pains and miseries on others."(Wadikar,102)

Through Sakharam's character, Tendulkar exposes the masochism of the lower middle class male. The bitter experiences in Sakharam's life leave him rough tough and foul mouthed. Wine and women are his chief attractions. Sakharam, the lord of the house decides everything and all the rules of the house are made by him only. Thus we can relate this to the code of Manusmriti which governs the Hindu marital relations even in present time.

According to Manusmriti, "In childhood a female must be subjected to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent."

Sakharam has his own set of rules and moral code which he expects his temporary mistress to follow. If the woman is ready to surrender herself to sakharam's lustful and selfish desires and is ready to provide him physical pleasure and domestic comfort she is allowed to stay in the house but in case she has objection then there is no place for her in his house and she may leave the house. Thus we can call Sakharam a self centred pleasure seeker who misuses the helplessness of the deserted and miserable women.

SAKHARAM: In this house, what I say goes. Understand ?.....And one last thing...you'll have to be a wife to me...You agree to the deal ? Right, then, go in and make some tea. (126)

Sakharam Binder is a naturalistic play presenting all the ugly side of life shocking the middle class society. Arundhati Banerjee aptly comments about the play, "In the portrayal of the lower strata of the society, Tendulkar's plays signify a definite departure from the main stream Marathi drama that mostly dealt with the more privileged section of the society. One of the reasons why there was such reaction against *Sakharam Binder* was its burning naturalism. Here was a raw chunk of life with all its ugliness and crudity which was more than a shock to refined and prudish middle-class audience. Such direct confrontation with "vulgar" reality was difficult for them to bear."(Banerjee,1992).

The play opens when Sakharam brings Laxmi to his house, the seventh one in the series of his women or we can say temporary wives. Laxmi is portrayed as an ideal, religious and obedient woman who bears all the tortures of her husband when she fails to conceive a child by him. Sakharam brings her to his home when she is thrown out of the house by her husband. Laxmi considers Sakharam as her husband now and tries her best to fulfil his each desire. Sakharam's relationship with Laxmi brings about some good changes in his life style. He becomes devoutly religious, takes a regular bath and transforms himself into a responsible family man. Sakharam himself finds changes in himself but is not convinced to give the credit of this change to Laxmi. However when Laxmi temporarily departs from his house, he himself confesses that Laxmi affected his life to some extent.

SAKHARAM: There have been many women here, but this one left a mark before she went away. (153)

The relationship of Laxmi and Sakharam is short lived because they both are totally different from each other. Laxmi is calm, sensitive and tender hearted whereas Sakharam is aggressive, violent and sensual.

On Laxmi's departure, Champa enters into Sakharam's house. She is wife of Fauzdar Shinde. She is younger, slightly plumper than Laxmi. The young, attractive and a lot sensual Champa transforms the religious

minded, responsible householder Sakharam into a sensual drunkard. Champa suffers at the hands of her mother, her husband, her male companion and at the end her female companion also. Both Champa and Laxmi suffer the marginalization at the hands of Sakharam.

Catherine Thankamma rightly comments, "Laxmi is thrown out of her house by her husband but she still considers him her God. Champa on the other hand is a figure of revolt." (Thankamma 2009)

Laxmi is very different from Champa. In the beginning Laxmi appears embarrassed and quiet but Champa on the other hand responds indifferently to Sakharam and asks him to prepare tea:

CHAMPA: Now make me a nice cup of tea, will you ?(158)

Laxmi accepts Sakharam almost as her husband and thus she willingly surrenders herself to him whereas Champa denies Sakharam to share bed with her at the first night saying :

CHAMPA: I don't like it at all that man-woman stuff. I had my honour to save. (162)

However at last to meet her bare needs of food, clothing and shelter she finally gives up and accepts Sakharam as her man in sheer helplessness. Kalindi Deshpande rightly remarks, "It is saddening to know that almost all his (Tendulkar's) women characters meekly submit to the injustice, violence and harrassment done to them. They seem to be helpless and have no other alternative but to go through the way that life has chosen for them. (Deshpande,91)

Where Laxmi tones down Sakharam's sensual nature Champa inflames it.

However, the departure of Laxmi from Sakharam's house is just a temporary phase. Laxmi is accused of stealing, by her nephew and his wife, and is thrown out of their house. Then she returns to Sakharam's house where Champa is already there. Champa persuades Sakharam to give shelter to Laxmi. The present situation with Laxmi and Champa under the same roof with Sakharam creates psychological storm in Sakharam's mind. Here in the play a triangular relationship between Laxmi, Sakharam and Champa is seen. Champa pities Laxmi and gives her shelter whereas Laxmi, once presented a religious Indian woman turns out to be wicked and cunning when Champa becomes her rival in love with Sakharam.

Presence of Laxmi and Champa together under the same roof makes Sakharam uneasy and he turns impotent in expressing love for Champa in Laxmi's presence. At this time Champa gets attracted towards Dawood and gets into an illicit relationship with him. Laxmi gets a good chance to bring down Champa in the eyes of Sakharam and thus she informs him about the love relationship between Champa and Dawood:

LAXMI: She – she goes to that Muslim – every day.

SAKHARAM: What ? Muslim? Which Muslim ?

LAXMI: Dawood. To Dawood. (195)

Sakharam's masculinity gets bitterly hurt and he kills Champa in his rage. Here we find a totally different side of Laxmi's personality. She turns out to be violent and cunning who appeared generous and kind hearted earlier. When Sakharam murders Champa at that time Laxmi shows more presence of mind than Sakharam. She instructs Sakharam to bury Champa in the house but when he fails to follow the instruction, Laxmi herself takes up the shovel and starts digging the grave for burying Champa's body.

LAXMI : Come- come on now...Don't waste time... Get the shovel from the garden. I'll clear some space in the kitchen. (197)

After Champa's murder Sakharam is presented as lost and bewildered and so much shocked as unable to carry out Laxmi's suggestions. This makes the ending slight artificial and dissatisfactory. Vasant Palshikar commenting on the ending of the play remarks, "Sakharam kills Champa as a revenge for his incapacity to satisfy her sexually. However, due to the incident of Champa's murder, the dramatic action of the play suffers a setback and becomes rather flawed and cheap."

All the three characters, Sakharam, Laxmi and Champa appear to be the victims of circumstances. Vasant Palshikar rightly observes, "Both Sakharam and Laxmi are extremely selfish, lustful, and dominating. In the conflict between Laxmi and Sakharam, the former naturally becomes victorious. The dramatic tension in the conflict grows potent with remarkable effects. Throughout the play, Laxmi is portrayed as pious, patient and kind-hearted. The ending of the play throws light on her real nature. The success of the play lies in its presentation of Laxmi's actual nature."

Towards the end of the play Sakharam gets emotional support from Laxmi, who helps him cover up the murder and get rid of the feeling of guilt :

LAXMI : Anyway she was a sinner. She'll go to hell. Not you. I've been a virtuous woman. My virtuous deeds will see both of us through. (196)

Thus in the play Laxmi is presented as a round character who modifies herself according to the demand and need of the hour. Each character of the play is a combination of good and bad, of weakness and strength. At the beginning, Laxmi is portrayed as sensitive and pious, kind-hearted woman but at the end of the play when Laxmi looks upon Champa as her rival in love she incites Sakharam to kill her and then she hides and try to cover up the murder. Hence, she loses the readers' sympathy thus developing a feeling of antipathy towards her on the other hand, cruel murder of Champa by Sakharam evokes sympathy towards Champa.

Hence to conclude we can say that heredity and environment are the determining factors that bring about the change in person's nature and character and is solely responsible for shaping up one's personality just as it shaped the personality and nature of the characters in the play.

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