

Delineation of Domestic Violence: A Study of Vijay Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder*

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Abstract – Violence and society are interlinked concepts which are inseparable as well as indissoluble and are realistically delineated through literature, the mirror of society. Violence has various forms and expressions which include physical, verbal, political, psychological and sexual violence. Vijay Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder* presents panoramic picture of all these hues and expressions of violence. The paper attempts to deal with these expressions of violence in *Sakharam Binder* not by merely describing such a significant part of real life with all its forms rather by adding to this reality by making the readers understand the negative aftermaths of violence.

Key Words: Violence, Society, Drive Reduction Theory, Frustration Aggression Displacement Theory

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"Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become" (Lewis, brainyquote.com). Realism with its different shades has been portrayed in Vijay Tendulkar's plays. One of its shades can be clearly seen in *Sakharam Binder*, a three-act play. This hue of realism is present in the form of violence which is inseparable part of any human being's life and society as well.

Tendulkar, in *Sakharam Binder*, shows the conflicts among characters in relationships, such as interpersonal and personal relationships which are entirely based on violence. He vividly depicts the expressions of the violence used by various characters in the play. The relationship of Sakharam, the protagonist of the play, with Laxmi and Champa, his seventh and eighth mistresses respectively, is the central point of the play. The whole story moves around these three characters mainly. Dawood is a minor character of the play, a friend of Sakharam Binder, who belongs to the Muslim community. In the first half of the play, Dawood is represented as a calm and well-mannered person. Later he proves to be a deceitful character as he cheats his friend Sakharam Binder by building an affair with Sakharam's eighth mistress Champa. Another minor character Faujdar Shinde, husband of Champa, is also portrayed as a violent person who drinks and beats his wife Champa. These characters are portrayed as violent characters who express their violent behavior in different expressions of violence such as physical, psychological, political, sexual and verbal.

The first act of the play opens with the advent of Laxmi, Sakharam's seventh mistress, in Sakharam's house. Sakharam's aggressive attitude and excessive demands make Laxmi uncomfortable to stay with him and she leaves the house at the end of the first act. The second act deals with Sakharam's lustful relationship with Champa who is an anarchist. This act deals with the fact that Champa ruins Laxmi's efforts of turning Sakharam into a religious and soft-hearted person and makes him a drunkard. The second act ends when Laxmi comes back to Sakharam's house as she is humiliated and driven out by her nephew on the charge of stealing. The third act deals with the worst condition of Sakharam due to the presence of Laxmi and Champa. It also deals with his frustration, aggressive behaviour and impotency. His impotency later enforces him to beat Laxmi and to kill Champa. The third act also shows the complexities in human mind as well as in human relationship.

Tendulkar's way of introducing the life and characters of the lower level and the impact of violence on their life and society is remarkably presented. He also shows how these characters react and express their anger towards violence when they become victims of it. The notable fact is that Tendulkar shows all offensiveness and ugliness through the character of Sakharam who is Brahman by caste. This caste is considered to be the most honoured caste of the society. It becomes stunning and unendurable for those who are in the habit of seeing Brahmans with honour in society. In spite of being a Brahman, Sakharam denies following moral and religious values of his caste

and society and on the contrary becomes the part of violence.

Tendulkar represents how hollow men like Sakharam tortures and harasses her physically, mentally and sexually. Not only Sakharam is presented as an exploitative person, but Champa also shows the instincts of violence. She exploits, beats, abuses and humiliates her husband for being an impotent. Her exploitative attitude helps in proving the fact how an oppressed turns into an oppressor due to evil circumstances faced by an oppressed. She is first victimized by her husband and then victimizes him back. Laxmi, who seems a good woman, plays tricks with Champa when she threatens Laxmi to drive her out. Laxmi traps her by exposing her affair with Dawood. She also supports Sakharam's evil deeds when he kills Champa in anger and frustration. So, every character is indulged in the act of violence.

So, many aspects of violence are deconstructed by Tendulkar in this play. The symptoms of violence can be seen in everyone, but its expressions differ from one person to another. Sakharam is shown as a violent natured man who beats, threats, kicks and abuses his wife while Laxmi is presented to show subtle violence. Outwardly, a committed and virtuous wife's role is played by Laxmi who follows Sakharam with no objection, but at the end she plays a violent role. Her violent reaction can be seen when she provokes Sakharam to kill Champa and soothes him after killing her. Being a religious lady, Laxmi does not see Sakharam's criminal act as a crime as she herself encourages him to kill Champa. So, it is proved by Tendulkar brilliantly that everyone has the instincts of violence. Tendulkar admits that violence cannot be driven out from society as well as from the mind of people as he himself asserts:

Unlike communist 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's bad. Without violence man would have turned into a vegetable. (Mahida 14)

His depiction of the relationship of man and woman looks strange, but he never tries to make it a vulgar depiction. He always tries to show what exactly exists in man and woman relationship. He also pays attention to the complexities of human mind and presents his characters as a blend of good and evil, weak and strong.

One of the cruelest expressions of violence which he depicts in this play is physical violence or use of physical force to subjugate other. Undoubtedly, violence is widespread in man-woman relationship and Tendulkar's elaboration of it helps us in determining the underlying power politics and the need of subjugation in every relationship. Beating, pushing, kicking, slapping or hitting with a weapon is very common in physical expression of violence

which may result in permanent disability or even in death of a victim.

The more brutal example of physical force appears in the play when Laxmi is beaten by a belt at the occasion of *Ganpati Puja*. Laxmi objects Dawood's participation in *Hindu Puja* because he is a Muslim. She says, "He's a Muslim-and we-we're Hindus" (144). Sakharam gets angry at her reaction, slaps her hardly, and hits her time and again when she shows her stubbornness, but Laxmi remains determined and says, "If you want to beat me, beat me inside. Not in front of God!" (144). He takes belt off the peg and beats her like an animal. He does not stop until she is half dead. Her body agitates with pain. It seems that Laxmi may have challenged his manliness which hurts Sakharam the most, so he reacts uncontrollably, "From within the dark kitchen the sounds of blow upon blow. Laxmi's agonized moans, but no whining...beating continues" (144). It is assumed by men that beating is the only way to control women, but they forget that the victim who is experiencing this kind of brutality may become temporarily paralyzed. Sakharam is aware of this fact but still he uses his physical power to declare his authority as a man.

Tendulkar does not show physical expression of violence only through his male characters but also through female characters. Another violent character in his play is Champa who is not passive like Laxmi and reacts against violence. She also starts dominating over her partner as well as others by using her physical force. Champa is first victimized by her parents and later by her husband Faujdar Shinde who tortured her physically. But now she has changed into a victimizer after suffering a lot. She expresses her pain:

He (Faujdar) brought me from my mother even before I'd become a woman. He married me when I didn't even know what marriage meant. He'd torture me at night. He branded me, and stuck needles into me and made me do awful, filthy things. I ran away. He brought me back and stuffed chili powder into that god-awful place, where it hurts most. (167)

Champa's poignant condition leaves a strong effect on the mind of audience and makes them feel sad. No doubt, she is tortured to great extent at the hands of her husband, but all her sufferings make her bold. Now she reacts violently at Sakharam's house. It seems that she has made her mind to take revenge on the society for her exploitation and also for not to tolerate such violence in life again. She lives her life according to her own will. Her violent behaviour can be seen when her husband Faujdar comes to her at Sakharam's house to bring her back with him, but she gets angry and starts beating him by recalling all her tortures that she got from him. She kicks him with her full strength and hits him on his face that makes his mouth bleed.

She says in anger, "Get up, you pig. I'll stuff some chilli into you now" (167). Sakharam who is standing aside gets shocked at Champa's physical power, bold nature and abusive behaviour.

Tendulkar correctly proves the ideology how a victim becomes a victimizer and victimizes others to reduce tension and frustration as it is depicted in Clark Leonard Hull's Drive Reduction Theory how a person reacts when he feels stressed and frustrated. According to this theory, He may get angry at any other person or may harm himself or in tension one may start drinking regularly to reduce tension or may start beating the person who is very close to him. The same instincts of violence can be seen in Champa, Sakharam and Faujdar who use violence as a means of reducing their frustration or getting rid of it. When Sakharam realizes his impotency due to Laxmi's presence, he shouts at Laxmi and forces her to leave the house at once. Champa also humiliates him and hurts his manly ego when she calls him an impotent. Consequently, his life becomes stressful because of the loss of his image as a potent man as it is a matter of reputation for a male.

Violence is a means of catharsis for a person like Sakharam. When he faces Laxmi, he becomes angry and recalls what Champa calls him. So, in aggression he points exit door to Laxmi. But Laxmi plays her trick and exposes Champa's affair with Dawood that makes Sakharam more frustrated than ever before. Consequently, he loses his temper and kills Champa in anger. So, Sakharam again reduces his tension by taking the life of a woman who humiliated him and cheated him. Thus, Tendulkar reveals the fact that a frustrated person, who victimizes other, can never get rid of his evil mind that leads him to commit such heinous crime.

Apart from this brutal expression of physical violence Tendulkar also describes sexual expression of violence that is inherent in the complex relationship of male and female. Tendulkar portrays most servile form of sexual violence in his play *Sakharam Binder* through his character Sakharam and his relationship with various women. He brings rejected, neglected and homeless women and gives them shelter. But he does not keep them with him for so long. He exploits them sexually to fulfil his physical need and treats them as servants. His conversation with his friend Dawood shows his inhuman nature. It proves him to be a person who does not treat deserted women as a human being and uses them as a thing to play as he says, "While it lasts, she has a roof over her head, and you get home cooked food. That's a cheap way fixing all your appetites" (129).

Tendulkar shows how Laxmi is compelled to react against this inhumanity due to her excessive work and his brutal sex. She suddenly bursts out and reacts to her oppression as she says:

...How much more can a person bear? It is 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 festal day. Nothing but work, work; all the time. You torture me whole day, you torture me at night. I'll drop dead one of these days and that will be the end. (146)

Another expression of violence which is depicted in this play is verbal violence that is especially shown through the character of Sakharam and Champa. They are more vulgar and more aggressive than any other character. In verbal expression of violence, a victim is subjugated through abusive language of victimizer that usually results in physical expression of violence. Sakharam is presented as an abuser while Laxmi and Champa are subjected. Champa, after subjugation, plays a role of an abuser and targets those who have assaulted her ever. For children, playing outside of Sakharam's house, it is a matter of mockery to see another woman who comes to stay with Sakharam for some time, so they crack jokes and laugh at them. Sakharam reacts angrily on their laughing and abuses them. His reaction to those children shows his aggressive, frustrated and abusive behaviour. It is true that frustration compels a person to react violently as Sakharam does in the beginning of the play. He uses vulgar language when he is laughed at by the children. The same is depicted in Dollard's Frustration Aggression Displacement Theory that if one gets disturbed while doing something, he gets frustrated and behaves violently. He expresses his aggressive behaviour and tries to control her psychologically when he says, "No free and easy ways here, see? I'm hot-headed. When I lose my temper, I beat the life out of people. I've a foul mouth" (125). Verbal violence is as destructive as physical and sexual expressions of violence. Physically exploited person may be sent to hospital to be cured, but verbally and psychologically victimized person may not be cured because verbal and mental violence struck deep into the soul that may result in mental disorder. Laxmi and Champa both are verbally oppressed, first by their own husbands and then by Sakharam. Faujdar's vulgar words for Champa, "What a woman! Buttocks this size breast so big ...Each ..." (165) clarifies that both the men are vulgar and abusive towards women.

Emotional or psychological expression of violence also takes place in this play. It is a well-known fact that emotion is a powerful tool of violence. It is practiced in all kinds of relationship to get control over a person. Verbal violence also affects the mentality of a victim. Sakharam shows his emotional trick of violence when he offers Laxmi some tea and oppresses her verbally too. He says, "Have some ... Laxmi. I've left mine inside. Sakharam. I'll knock out your mouth if I hear that again! I'm offering you tea from my cup and you tell me yours is in the kitchen" (137).

She knows well the pattern of violence as she gets it on regular basis. Although, Champa tries to subjugate Laxmi verbally and mentally yet a feeling of insecurity can be felt at her face too. All the characters play their trump cards to take advantage of the opportunity when they get the chance. Champa's authoritative attitude is presented when she agrees to Laxmi and allows her to stay with her in Sakharam's house on an agreement that Laxmi will look after the house and she takes care of Sakharam. But it is not as simple as it seems because Champa allows Laxmi to stay with her, not to show sympathy towards her pathetic condition, but to take advantage of her, as she wants her to stay at home when she goes out to meet Dawood. This shows Champa's arbitrariness as she uses Laxmi as a tool to fulfil her physical need. She also traps Sakharam by calling him an impotent so that she cannot be exploited sexually by him because she has an illicit relationship with Dawood. Sakharam's realization of his impotency creates chaos in him and he decides to drive out Laxmi as she is the only reason after his mental turmoil.

Thus, various sort of violence can be visualized through each and every character of the play whether one is victim or victimizer. Physical, verbal, psychological, political and sexual violence is part and parcel of the play and is very realistically delineated by Tendulkar through the failure of institutional marriage as well as live-in-relationship. Neither the concept of institutional marriage nor live-in-relationship provides any security for women. Man like Sakharam provides shelter to the deserted woman and tortures her mentally, physically, sexually and verbally. Tendulkar does not just present the panoramic picture of violence in middle class society rather he adds to it by making the audience relate to such violence and how violence can turn into failure of relationships. Tendulkar indirectly conveys the message that to live a happy married life, there must be adjustment, adaptability, trust, freedom and above all understanding in relationship while violence of any kind leads to destruction and failure.

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