

## **Vijay Tendulkar was a Revolutionary Playwright: A Study of His Select Plays**

**Dr. Nilesh Uttamrao Hume**, SNDT College of Arts & SCB, College of Com. & Sci. for Women, Mumbai-20, Email: [nileshhume83@gmail.com](mailto:nileshhume83@gmail.com)

---

**Article Received:** 02/04/2022

**Article Accepted:** 30/04/20232

**Published Online:** 31/05/2022

**DOI:**10.47311/IJOES.2022.4.5.150

---

**Abstract:** Vijay Tendulkar, one of the most influential playwrights in Indian theatre, was known for his bold and thought-provoking works that addressed various societal issues. His plays were characterized by their timeless relevance, shedding light on themes such as revenge, hypocrisy, patriarchy, and violence, which continue to resonate with contemporary audiences. Tendulkar's focus on the middle class was deliberate, aiming to expose the hidden and often unpleasant aspects of their lives. He had a knack for shocking his audience by revealing the darker sides of human nature and society, challenging conventional moralities and norms. Through his plays, Tendulkar presented the complex relationships between individuals and society without taking a moral high ground. A key theme prevalent in his works was the idea that certain situations lead individuals to behave in animalistic ways towards one another. Tendulkar skillfully depicted this aspect of human behavior in his plays, showing the impact of circumstances on people's actions and choices. Some of his notable plays like "Silence! The Court is in Session," "The Vulture," "Sakharam Binder," "Ghashiram Kotwal," "Encounter in Umbugland," "Kamala," "Kanyadaan," and "The Cyclist," among others, brought about a significant transformation in Marathi theatre and contemporary Indian theatre as a whole.

**Key words:** morality, norms, society, relationships etc.

Tendulkar's plays were marked by a deliberate portrayal of the darker aspects of life, forcing the audience to confront the harsh realities of human existence. He depicted an atmosphere of violence and cruelty, showcasing how human beings often exhibit animalistic instincts driven by lust, greed, and self-interest. By portraying the beastly and vicious tendencies within human nature, Tendulkar emphasized the ongoing struggle between civilization and the innate animalistic traits that persist within individuals. He challenged the idea that humanity had entirely overcome its primitive instincts, highlighting the constant battle within oneself and society. Through his realistic portrayal of violence as an intrinsic part of human life, Tendulkar aimed to advocate for social justice. His plays were grounded in real-life experiences, offering a raw and unpretentious view of societal issues. Tendulkar's commitment to representing the truth of human existence, with all its complexities and contradictions, made his works vivid and enduring. His plays continue to serve as a mirror reflecting the uncomfortable realities of society and the human condition.

Vijay Tendulkar's contribution to post-independence drama has been profound, as he adeptly presented the harsh realities of life, relationships, and existence in his works. He offered a candid portrayal of modern society, revealing its true essence with all its predicaments, challenges, difficulties, and complexities. Tendulkar's characters were crafted authentically, devoid of any attempts to moralize or idealize them, contributing to a naturalistic portrayal of life. Rather than offering clear-cut solutions, Tendulkar's plays were designed to provoke questions, encouraging the audience to contemplate various aspects of human life and societal issues. By intentionally leaving the solutions open-ended, he aimed to pave the way for multiple possibilities for change, allowing for diverse interpretations and courses of action. Tendulkar's plays act as a mirror reflecting the inner and outer worlds of individuals, shedding light on the ethical questions and complexities prevalent in society. He skillfully tackled the prevalent tendencies within Indian society, such as male dominance and feminine vulnerability, portraying these dynamics with depth and insight. Across his plays, Tendulkar explored the multifaceted nature of human characters and the intricacies of human relationships. His works delved into the complexities of blood relationships, dissecting them at various levels. For instance, plays like "Kamala," "Kanyadaan," "Ghashiram Kotwal," and "Gidhade" analyzed and depicted relationships in diverse dimensions. In "The Vultures," he exposed how greed for money could drive family members to act savagely and lose their sanity. Tendulkar's plays offered innovative variations not only in their thematic content but also in their narrative forms. His exploration of themes, character complexities, and societal dynamics showcased his commitment to pushing the boundaries of traditional dramatic storytelling, making his works both thought-provoking and artistically rich. His plays serve as profound reflections of the complexities and nuances of human life and relationships, urging audiences to contemplate the intricacies of societal issues while challenging conventional norms.

"Silence! The Court is in Session" stands as one of Vijay Tendulkar's most exceptional dramatic works, originally penned in Marathi and later translated into English by Priya Adarkar. Renowned for its artistic brilliance and narrative resourcefulness, the play seamlessly intertwines social criticism with the tragedy faced by an individual who becomes a victim of societal prejudices. The inception of the play stemmed from a real-life incident that Tendulkar chanced upon. He overheard a group of amateur actors he was guiding to their destination in Vile Parle, a Mumbai suburb where he resided. The group was preparing to stage a mock-trial. Drawing inspiration from this incident, Tendulkar crafted the play, setting it in the form of a "play within a play" or a "rehearsal." "Silence! The Court is in Session" focuses on the struggles of a young woman trapped within a male-dominated society. Tendulkar adeptly criticizes the societal follies and sheds light on the harsh realities prevalent in society. The play captures the vitality of contemporary life, delving deep into the human psyche to reveal its darker aspects. Tendulkar's keen observations of life, society, and personal experiences permeate his works, including this play, allowing for a poignant exploration of societal issues. Central to the narrative is the problem of unmarried motherhood, showcasing the challenges and stigmatization faced by women who find themselves in such circumstances within a judgmental society. Through this powerful portrayal, Tendulkar confronts societal biases and unveils the complexities and hardships

faced by individuals caught in the web of societal norms and prejudices. "Silence! The Court is in Session" remains a significant work in the realm of Indian theatre, offering a thought-provoking and insightful examination of societal issues, human nature, and the struggle for individual agency within a society riddled with biases and constraints.

"Kamala" (1981), another significant work by Vijay Tendulkar, is rooted in a real-life incident that made headlines in India. The play draws inspiration from the Indian Express expose conducted by Ashwin Sarin, who notably purchased a girl from a rural flesh market and presented her at a press conference. Tendulkar's adaptation of this real-life incident serves as a critique of various aspects of society, shedding light on its harsh realities. Through "Kamala," Tendulkar targets two main issues prevalent in society: the realm of journalism and the institution of marriage. The protagonist, Jaisingh Jadhav, depicted as a self-centered and opportunistic journalist, purchases Kamala, an Adivasi woman, from the rural flesh market in Luhardaga. Jadhav's actions lack any moral or altruistic intention to reform Kamala's life. Instead, he views her merely as a means to advance his career, seeking personal gain, promotion, and reputation in his professional sphere. The play vividly illustrates how Jadhav's obsession with achieving name and fame has rendered him devoid of empathy, love, or ethical considerations. His manipulative and callous behavior highlights the corrupting influences within both the field of journalism and personal relationships. Tendulkar's portrayal of this exploitative transaction and the callous nature of Jadhav's actions serves as a scathing critique of societal vices. It confronts the dehumanizing aspects of a profit-driven media industry that sensationalizes and exploits human suffering for personal gain. Additionally, the play interrogates the institution of marriage, highlighting the degradation of values and ethics in personal relationships. "Kamala" thus stands as a powerful critique of the moral bankruptcy within certain spheres of society, urging audiences to contemplate the ethical dimensions of journalism and the erosion of values in human relationships, all through the lens of a gripping and impactful narrative.

Vijay Tendulkar, indeed, was a creative force with a keen sensibility that allowed him to deeply probe and expose various societal dynamics. His works often highlighted the alienation experienced by the modern individual in relation to contemporary politics. Tendulkar skillfully portrayed the domination of men over women, shedding light on both overt and covert forms of violence ingrained within human beings. A recurring theme in his works was the profound and unwavering awareness of women's vulnerability within the complex social hierarchy of India. At the core of Tendulkar's concerns lay the intricate relationship between the individual and society. His plays repeatedly presented the latent violence and lust lurking within middle-class life, the subsequent devastation caused, and the inherent loneliness experienced by individuals. Through his narratives, he effectively depicted the direct and sometimes subtle violence that pervades real lives, often omnipresent yet concealed beneath the surface in societal interactions. Tendulkar's plays primarily focused on individuals placed within the larger societal framework, exploring the tensions and conflicts arising from this juxtaposition. His creativity possessed a prismatic quality, offering myriad perspectives and unveiling the multitude of colors present within the human experience. He had an exceptional ability to capture the nuances and complexities of human behavior, societal norms, and the intricate interplay between the individual and the collective.

His plays were not just artistic creations but mirrors reflecting the realities of society, inviting audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about human nature and societal structures. Tendulkar's ability to tackle these issues with depth, sensitivity, and a piercing insight into human psychology made his works both resonant and impactful. His legacy remains as a testament to his astute understanding of human complexities and his dedication to shedding light on the intricate web of societal relationships and tensions.

**References:**

- Banerjee, Arundhati. „Introduction“, Vijay Tendulkar: Five Plays New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Saran, Satya and Patil, Vimal. “An interview with Vijay Tendulkar”. Femina, June 8 – 22, 1984.
- Sonalkar, Sudhir. “Vijay Tendulkar and the Metaphor of Violence”. The Illustrative Weekly of India, No. 20, 1983.
- Tendulkar, Vijay. Collected Plays in Translation New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Wadikar, Shailja B. Vijay Tendulkar: A Pioneer Playwright New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2008.