

## A Study of the Psychology of Women Characters in Vijay Tendulkar's Sakharam Binder

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### Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the most eminent playwrights of post-modern India and through his plays, has focused on the evils taking place in the society. We, as human beings are endowed with the most superior minds. We are considered to be the most intelligent beings on the planet and that, with changing times has given rise to numerous ambitions and desires. These emotions, if not fulfilled, give birth to enormous pain. We are left agitated, frustrated, unhappy and what not about our helplessness. These negative emotions bear the fruit of further animosity towards our fellow beings. In this research paper I will try to discuss the psychology of such two prominent women characters of Tendulkar's play *Sakharam Binder* who show us two different sides of the same society.

**Keywords:** Women, psyche, morals, sins, virtue.

We all grow up listening to fairy tales and the emphasis is always on the Knight in Shining Armour, who always makes his appearance to save the weak and fragile queen. The children are made to believe in Santa Claus, the tooth fairy; our faith in Superheroes is not disturbed even when we grow up. When, as kids, we believe in fairies, we tend to believe in supreme goodness and the evergreen notion of 'good triumphs over evil'. The belief somehow fades away with the arrival of maturity as we wake up to a different reality every morning. The whole confusing journey from fairy tales to established moral standards, then moving onto grim realities present a gloomy picture. It looks like a dark tunnel that we have to go through and the hope to see the light at the other end is absent most of the times.

The moral lessons we receive while growing up adds to the agony and frustration of a grown up. One is left confused between his own will to be happy and to surrender to the conventions of the society and gain reputation. We sow the seeds of love in the young minds and frown upon the resulting inter-caste marriages. We praise the knights fighting for righteousness, but do not like our children indulging in those fights. The whole structure of society is based on such numerous hypocritical notions where a stark contrast is visible in what we preach and practice. This disparity is strongly depicted in the plays of eminent Indian playwright Vijay Tendulkar who, through his works, exposes the real picture which is deprived of superficial moral standards.

Tendulkar was born on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1928 in Mumbai, Maharashtra and started writing at the age of eleven. He picked on various flaws present in the contemporary society and is well known as a controversial writer for writing plays like *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972), *Sakharam Binder* (1972), *Kamala* (1981) and *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1967). His plays dealt with burning issues like caste discrimination, male dominance, human trafficking and how women emerged as worst sufferers in his time. His play *Ghashiram Kotwal* was a political satire against the established government of his time. *Sakharam Binder* narrates the story of a binder named Sakharam who is a womanizer and takes pride in his manners towards women. Both the plays were eventually banned their too natural depiction of reality.

Vijay Tendulkar, in his play *Sakharam Binder*, challenges not only the institution of marriage but also the accepted moral standards associated with it. The play revolves around Sakharam, who works in a local press and gives shelter to women who are abandoned by their husbands, or widows who are destitute. The only favour he asks for, in return, is that his needs are taken care off. He loathes the whole concept of marriage and thinks himself a superior being than others. His renunciation of his socially superior caste and adopting an inferior one, or refusing to surrender to the normalcy of society by not getting married, show us how less he cared for society. The problem lies with the fact that his indifferences towards society does not result in anything good, instead adds to the malpractices taking place in it.

The play begins with the introduction of Laxmi as the seventh woman brought by Sakharam in his house. She is portrayed as a shy, innocent, average looking woman who is submissive and timid. An argument with her drunkard husband led to her fleeing the house. She eventually finds shelter in Sakharam's house. Sakharam instructs the duties to her which consist of cooking, cleaning and satisfying him sexually. The play progresses and we come to know the violent side of Sakharam in the following scenes when he beats Laxmi for talking to an ant and not allowing Dawood (Sakharam's friend) to attend Puja. He beats her with belt and the torture continues for months to come for reasons varying from evening Puja to her resistance to his physical needs.

Laxmi, all this while, is portrayed as a submissive, religious, pious woman with high moral standards. A twist comes in the play when Laxmi decides to leave Sakharam when she can no longer bear the torture. A sudden stand from a weaker sex looks as a fresh change unless we come to the end of the play.

The next woman is introduced as Champa who is flamboyant, outspoken, is more exposed to the world and lives on her own terms. She refuses to surrender to Sakharam and we can notice the shock received by him. Champa eventually compromises with Sakharam after realizing that both their ends will meet through this. Her only resistance to Sakharam's physical needs is subsided by her drunken state. Champa, even after coming from a good family, is portrayed as the social rebel. She is too bold for her time and society and the initial impressions she leaves on the audience cannot be considered very positive.

The striking contrast in the portrayal of both the women characters stand for the huge gap between orthodox social setup and acceptance of the reality. Champa stands not only as a bold rebel but also as a symbol of freedom. Her brief affair with Dawood seems unpardonable to Sakharam and Laxmi as a result of which Champa loses the battle for her liberty, happiness and life. We suddenly become a witness to the double standards and hypocrisy of people. A womanizer and a mistress kill another woman because she could not satisfy their set standards and wanted to live on her own terms. If Champa had not convinced Sakharam to accommodate Laxmi after her return, Laxmi would have had to live a miserable life.

The world would be a happier place if we all, rather than conforming to the social structure, followed our heart and desire. Laxmi is symbolic of how people around us keep chanting name of god while committing sins. We never worship to thank but to seek forgiveness, and mostly to make Him our partner in crime. We try to justify our Karma in the name of God, thinking, had we done something wrong He would have punished us. It is through Laxmi we get to see beyond the conventional reality. Her character works in layers and the deeper we delve, the darker the scene gets. The journey of Laxmi's character from a timid, submissive, subservient woman to the outspoken, firm one in the end scene is a piece of reality. It is her subtle shrewdness that forces Sakharam to eventually submit to her authority, what he gets in return is her support for committing a crime. She justifies the murder by saying, "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. I'll stay with you. I'll look after you." Laxmi does not doubt herself even for a moment. The thought does not cross her mind, that may be, in the slightest chance, both of them have done something wrong. She is ready to sacrifice her good deeds for Sakharam, "I'll tell him to count my good deeds as yours."

The sunlight that brings hope and joy in everyone's life is disregarded by Laxmi as she thinks, "in the day man reigns. And men are sinful." On the other hand the darkness of the night is embraced by her, "Night is when God rules." She constantly claims to be, "a virtuous woman" but leaves her husband and comes back to Sakharam and tells him that she has tied the sacred thread around her neck in Sakharam's name. She backstabs Champa because of whom she had found shelter. The character of Laxmi presents an image of the hypocritical society. What we preach is not followed by what we practice and the difference is what causes imbalance and frustration in our lives. The complexity in our lives is a result of our own confusion. The devotion of Laxmi changes from her husband to Sakharam and when she realizes someone else is taking her position, she revolts. The suppressed desires of a young woman- the physical needs, the authority over a household, and the power over a man- are surfaced in the form of a conspiracy. She picks on the weakness that a man cannot tolerate his woman going out with another man irrespective of any other fact. Towards the end of the play Laxmi emerges victorious as she gets everything a woman may desire. Champa, on the other hand loses the battle to the shrewdness concealed in Laxmi.

The worldly intelligence we all look for, all our lives is nothing but a deep understanding of human consciousness. We want to learn how to behave, talk, and sit in front others not because we want to create an impression of our own, but we look for reaction from others. If the received reactions are not met with our preconceived judgments, we strive harder to create the desired response. Champa fails to understand the possibilities of giving shelter to a woman who has come back after leaving her husband to a man she abandoned earlier. She does not realize that Laxmi could be a threat to her life and might get intimidated by her position in the household which in the past belonged to her. The long term consequences are overlooked by Champa and leads to her own doom. Champa symbolizes the naïve, truly innocent sect of the society, who tends to believe in the supreme goodness. Both the women characters have their own thinking capacity which is cleverly portrayed by Tendulkar. We might find these women around us disguised as someone else, and their thoughts and deeds manipulated on various degrees.

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