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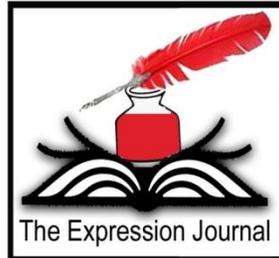
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PORTRAYAL OF VIOLENCE IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *SAKHARAM- THE BOOK BINDER*

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Abstract

Violence is an integral part of the life of human beings. Tendulkar's plays illustrate violence in its fullest form. Violence is noticed everywhere in Tendulkar's dramatic world – excessive sexual lust of the protagonist in *Sakharam, the Book Binder*, the cruel cunning game in the form of a mock trial in *Silence!*, overambitious young journalist's craze for money and fame in *Kamala*, the rude and brutal interactions of the family members in *Vultures*, Ghashiram's revenge on the Brahmins of Poona and vice-versa in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, a young Dalit's brutal treatment of his pregnant wife in *Kanyadaan* and the mob's physical violence in *Encounter in Umbugland*. *Sakharam the Book Binder* explores violence at the verbal level. This Paper tries to explain the Portrayal of Violence in Tendulkar's *Sakharam, the Book Binder*.

Key-Words

Physical and Sexual Violence – Institution of Marriage – Special code – Psychological turmoil – Patriarchal values – Verbal Violence.

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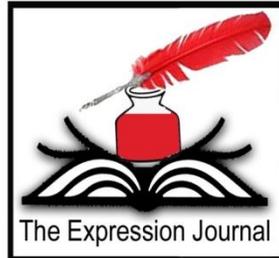
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Violence is an integral part of the life of human beings. Tendulkar's plays illustrate violence in its fullest form. Violence is noticed everywhere in Tendulkar's dramatic world – excessive sexual lust of the protagonist in *Sakharam, the Book Binder*, the cruel cunning game in the form of a mock trial in *Silence!*, overambitious young journalist's craze for money and fame in *Kamala*, the rude and brutal interactions of the family members in *Vultures*, Ghashiram's revenge on the Brahmins of Poona and vice-versa in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, a young Dalit's brutal treatment of his pregnant wife in *Kanyadaan* and the mob's physical violence in *Encounter in Umbugland*. *Sakharam the Book Binder* explores violence at the verbal level.

Shailaja observes: "*Sakharam Binder* exhibits excessive physical lust of an angry man and helplessness of women, which compels them to bear physical and sexual violence of their master" (7). Like *Vultures*, it also explores violence and sexual lust, deep rooted in human nature, while projecting the complexity of human character. Each character in the play is the combination of strength, weakness, good and evil. *Sakharam* appears crude, aggressive and violent. But in his association with Laxmi, he displays tendencies of having been a religious and family loving man. As soon as Champa enters into his life, all the desired changes evaporate and he is shown as transformed into a sensual drunkard with perverted thoughts of sexual enjoyment. Laxmi, once the embodiment of an ideal Indian woman, tender, religious and self effacing, now turns out to be wicked and vicious when

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Champa becomes her rival in love. After Champa's murder, she shows greater presence of mind than Sakharam. Champa, who is apparently aggressive and violent like Sakharam, has a good deal of sympathy for Laxmi when the latter refuses to give her a shelter. Tendulkar opines:

Sakharam was born in a Brahmin family. Unable to bear the torture given by his parents, he ran away from the home at the age of eleven. This bitter experience of his childhood hardened him and made him violent. The frustrated household life in his childhood crushes his tender feelings and leaves him a rough and tough guy growing like a desert cactus that stands on the onslaughts of stormy weather (Sarat 56).

John le Carre says about cruel parents: "I learned from an early age that adults were very dangerous people and that home was a dangerous place" (GK 56). The cruel and discriminatory treatment of Sakharam by his parents made him a self-alienated psychopath. He speaks vulgar language, drinks liquor, smokes cigar and indulges in mechanical sex. Yet, the dissatisfaction and mental agitation does not leave him and he continues his perverted behaviour.

Sakharam does not believe in the institution of marriage. Marriage contains a lot of commitment. He does not like to commit himself in the name of marriage. So, he remains unmarried all through his life. However, he gives refuge to a helpless, desolate woman not with a view to civilize her but to exploit her and to fulfil his sexual passion. It is a kind of contractual relationship based on mutual convenience. Wine and woman are his chief attractions. He has his own rules of the game, a special moral code, which he expects his temporary mistress to abide by. The play opens when he brings Laxmi to his house. She is the seventh one in the series of his women or 'temporary wives', to call them so. Shailaja observes: "Laxmi is portrayed as an ideal Indian woman like Savitri in the mythological story" (98). Her husband has tormented her as she fails to conceive a child by him. Now, for her, Sakharam is her husband. She tries her level best to fulfil his every act, despite the fact that he even fails to understand her expectations and exploits her physically as well psychologically. Sakharam's association with Laxmi brings an eye-catching change in his life but that lasts for a short period. Her objection to inviting Daud, Sakharam's Muslim friend in the prayer of Lord Ganapati annoys Sakharam and makes him violent. He beats her inhumanly. After this incident, she leaves him instantly. Later Champa enters Sakharam's life. She is the converse of Laxmi; she leaves her husband as she cannot tolerate the vicious torture of Shinde, her husband. She never bothers about tradition. The cantankerous treatment of her husband makes her confident and courageous, but alienated and frigid. She does not accept the conventional norms and values regarding man-woman relationship. Her violence is not without reasons. Her mother shows absolute disregard for her and she sells her even before she matures. Her husband's brutal treatment of her

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makes her aggressive and violent. No doubt she is naïve and sexy, but her mother and husband are responsible for being what she is now.

Once, Shinde visits Sakharam's house but Champa drags him by the collar, slaps him, beats him and kicks him. Sakharam, who once criticized traditional women for worshipping their cruel husbands, is greatly shocked at this and says to Champa: "What kind of a woman are you? Look, what you've done to him! He's your husband. Haven't you a heart" (SB 167). She then says to him about the sadistic nature of her husband:

No, I don't have a heart. He chewed it up raw long ago. He bought 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 to do awful things. I ran away. He brought me back and stuffed chili powder into that god-awful place, where it hurts most. That bloody pimp! What's left of my heart now? He tore lumps out of it, he did. (SB 167)

This shows how she was brutally treated by her husband. Her husband's and mother's malicious treatment meted out to her crushes her tender feelings, and further, the sexual exploitation by her husband leaves her rough and tough. After sometime, Laxmi returns once again to Sakharam's house. Champa persuades him to give her shelter. Champa's frank confession, though vulgar, bears authentication to her helpless, pathetic and tragic condition. But it smacks of independent feministic view. When Sakharam attacks Laxmi asking her to go out of his house, Champa justifies her interference:

Because you will be hanged for murder, and to fill this belly of mine I'll have to start hunting around every day for a new customer. Instead of having ten beasts tearing at me every day, I'd rather do what one says to me. (SB 184)

In Richard Wright's *Savage Holiday* Fowler keeps pestering Mabel about her men and their phone calls and she hysterically shrieks:

I'll never marry a man like you ... "You'd drive me out of my mind! What's the matter with you?" ... Listen, I sleep with whom I damn please. I'm a woman; I'm free... What the hell's the matter with you? Why do you keep on prying into me? Your mind works in a strange way ... (213)

However, the presence of Champa and Laxmi together creates a psychological turmoil in Sakharam. Sarat Babu observes:

Her presence makes Sakharam impotent and Champa seeks sexual pleasure with Dawood, Sakharam's friend. Feeling frustrated and hurt by his newly acquired impotence, Sakharam decides to drive Laxmi out of the house. But Laxmi insists that she is his real wife and that she should be allowed to be with him. Then, she tells him about Champa's relationship with Dawood. Enraged by this, Sakharam strangles Champa to death and feels aghast at his own action. Then, Laxmi not only supports his action but also encourages him to bury her dead body secretly in the

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house itself. She says to him: "Hush! Don't shout. Not a word. 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. I'll do what you say. And I'll die with my head on your lap. Yes. Now don't be afraid. We'll - we'll bury her. Where do you think? Not out there. No, somewhere here. Inside. And we'll say that she went away. No one will suspect. I'll swear by God. He knows everything. He knows I am virtuous. He'll stand by me. He won't judge you. I'll tell Him to count my good deeds as yours. I'll do everything for you. Yes". (SB 197)

Laxmi, having thus imbibed patriarchal values, supports the inhuman behaviour of Sakharam and betrays Champa ungratefully.

This play shows how domestic violence causes self-alienation that makes people cold-blooded and perverted and it presents the situation objectively without making any value judgments. Sakharam is to be seen as the product of patriarchal tyranny at home. He is a victim of the horrific libretto written on his kindhearted mind in his early childhood by his psycho-pathic parents. He wants to rebel against the inhuman traditions that made his father treat him unkindly. But paradoxically enough, he proves worse than a traditional husband. He is neither an intellectual nor a reformer like Nath of *Kanyadaan* who also fails miserably in his experiment of intercaste marriage. Vijay Tapas points out: "Sakharam exemplifies two kinds of violence: Sadism and Masochism. All the characters belong to microscopic minority" (32). Here, Laxmi successfully tones down Sakharam's sensuality, while Champa inflames it. The simultaneous presence of these two women together, who are foils to each other, disturbs him. It creates a psychological storm in his life. Champa develops her relationship with Daud and Laxmi, looking upon Champa as her rival in love, incites Sakharam to kill her and helps him in covering up the murder. The vicious treatment she metes out to Champa creates the feeling of antipathy towards her in the audience's minds. Thus, this play presents violence at its verbal level and finds its best expression in the language, which is too full of abusive, obscene terms and tabooed words.

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