

Social Realities in Vijay Tendulkar's *The Vultures*

Prof. Dr Parul Tyagi

Principal

Rani Bhagyawati Devi Mahila Mahavidyalaya

Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, India (246701)

Abstract

In this paper, one of the famous plays of Vijay Tendulkar *The Vultures* is critically examined and an effort has been made to present the bitter truth of today's life. Humans have become so selfish and greedy that they break moral laws and social values without hesitation. They behave savagely, just like hungry vultures. As the vultures barbarously and in a savage, ruthless manner eat the flesh and fight with each other to get more and more flesh in the same way greedy members of the Pitale family fight with each other to get more amount of money without thinking about family values, social and moral customs and values. As a result of this avarice, they alienate themselves and become aloof in society and in the end fall into the deep pit of hollowness and nothingness, completely lost and ruined. The paper is an attempt to highlight today's social structure where greed, anger and selfishness lead to total darkness and the destruction of family bonds and social moral values.

Keywords: Savage and barbarous, alienation, morals and social values, degradation, illicit relationship, destruction of blood relations

INTRODUCTION

"There is no fire like lust, there is no grip like hatred; there is no net like delusion; there is no river like craving," (The Dhammapada). In this quote, greed is compared to sinking in the river. One who develops a desire for monetary gains he/she ends up getting drowned in the river of greed. Greed makes a mind shallow, yet heavy enough to drown it in the depth of darkness. Just as a human who gets drowned in a river and never returns to the shore. In the same way, a greedy person who runs after monetary gains loses himself and eventually gets destroyed in the end by loneliness and alienation. Vijay Tendulkar's play *The Vultures* proves this quote to be apt and accurate.

In the play, the family members of the Pitale family are compared to vultures. A hungry vulture eats his prey the same way the Pitale family people are hungry for money and can go to any extent for it. They do not think about blood and family relations. They are presented as vultures fighting among themselves for a bigger share. In the end, the result is complete loss and alienation of family members. Ramakant, Umakant and Manik the three children of Pappa are ready to kill their father for his property. This is evidently visible as Pappa says:

PAPPA: If I die, It'll be a release! They're all waiting for it. But I'm your own father, after all! If I die, I'll become a ghost. I'll sit on your chest! I won't let you enjoy a rupee of it. I earned it all. Now these wolves, these bullies!...(209)

There is hatred between the father and the children. No parent would want his children to die but here Pappa wants his children to die before him as he despises his children for being so greedy. This is presented as Pappa further says, "And not wits enough to make a rupee! You're after my life! You're talking of my funeral. But remember this. I'll see you dead first! I'll see your pyres burning, you pimps!" (214). The siblings in the desire to accumulate more and more money take actions to hurt each other without regarding the blood relations they share. Umakant and Ramakant beat their sister Manik, as she says, "Oh-h! These bastards will burn me alive one day! They'll poison me, they'll slit my throat." (215) Women have been deprived of inheriting their parents property. Even though Section 14 of the 1956 Act, gives full ownership right over any movable or immovable property, it's still a taboo in families.

Pappa is also presented as a greedy person who occupies his brother's share of the property by wrong means without considering the family relation. Umakant says about Pappa:

UMAKANT: How'd Uncle...get here, Ramya? Pappa... Pappa cut his-er-throat! Push him out'f business' Ruined'm! Turned'm out of house. Fifteen years ago. (218) The immorality is embedded throughout the play. The children disrespect their father Pappa so casually. We can see it in their speech:

RAMAKANT: [catching him] Which bank? In which bank, Pappa? Speak up. Or this bloody Umayya here may murder you for nothing the bloody bastard! Tell me In which bank is the money, Pappa?

UMAKANT: [shouting] Are you going to tell us or not, you old swine?

The children go to such an extent that Pappa begs them to leave him and let him live. Pappa says, "Don't kill me...Let me go, I beg of you! Let me go!" (230) Thus, all the members are greedy and this avarice for money makes them aloof in their life. In end, they destroy all family relations and become alienated.

Beena Agarwal rightly comments, "*The Vultures* is a distinctive type of play in comparison to the other plays of Tendulkar. Here, the dramatist manipulates various types of violence, emerging out of drunkenness, greed, sexual aberration and immorality, anticipating a complete collapse of the value system, sanctity of family and familial responsibility, man's disobedience to the social orders and moral principles." (Agarwal, 104). She further adds, "Tendulkar through fractured images of the characters makes a profound analysis of the growing sickness of modern man who is morally invalid and mentally disabled." (Agarwal, 104).

In the play, all the characters have lost their moral values and social order of life. They have stooped to the lowest extent that they have forgotten their morals, family values, and social culture. They are involved in illicit relationships ruining the sanctity of marriage and family responsibility. Rama who is the wife of Ramakant is a childless woman who has a craving for motherhood goes to such an extent that she forgets all the marital woes and family values. She gets involved in an illicit sexual relationship with Rajaninath, who is an illegitimate son of Pappa. Ramakant is absorbed in the bad habit of drinking which has made him impotent. Uday Shankar Ojha quotes S.T Kharat, "To me, they are cold-blooded Machiavellian, cunning characters." He further adds, "Rama calls Rajaninath "Bhaiya" and Rajaninath knows that she is his sister-in-law. Still they cross the limit and develop the incestuous relationship." (Ojha,148). Thus, no one cares for family values, morality and principles. They have sunk so deep into the abyss of darkness that they are cheating on each other carelessly. Their blind eyes can only see wealth and for gaining they are after each other's life and can go to any extent. The Pitale family is a rich well-to-do family but their madness and greed for money, never let them be satisfied with what they have. They are just busy in the labyrinth of collecting more and more money and filling their lockers in denial of higher values. The family members are a perfect example of the modern-day human, who is aloof and alienated in society. He/She has lost moral values. Their power of thinking and reasoning is blinded by their hunger for money. Sarat Babu aptly writes, "The Vultures is about the inhuman violence due to self-alienation as well as due to selfishness and avarice." (Babu: Introduction,53)

"The play is a brutal portrayal of the dark side of human nature and depicts its inborn evil tendencies like greed, selfishness, wickedness and violence." (Tapadia,131) Ramakant and Umakant beat their sister Manik cruelly to get money from her. When Manik gets pregnant, both the brothers Ramakant and Umakant plan to blackmail the Raja of Hondour for their benefit who

is in an illicit relationship with their sister Manik. They do not care about the reputation of their sister and family reputation. They are ready to get the news of their sister's illicit pregnancy published in newspapers to blackmail Raja of Hondour to extract money from him. This is visible in their conversation as they talk to each other about the plan:

RAMAKANT: Why shouldn't we blackmail that Hondour chap? Ourselves?

UMAKANT: [scornfully] Into marrying Manik?

RAMAKANT: Oh, no, no, no! Not that, brother. Hear me. She's pregnant. If you want her fixed, put down the money. Cash down. Twenty thousand, what? More, if you like. Otherwise, bloody publicity! Uproar in the bloody newspapers! Let's have a go! (236)

Throughout history, women have been objectified as mere human who exists to carry a child. Ramakant and Umakant consider their sister as a very object who's only taken care of for their own benefit. The mental exhaustion which Manik must have felt due to premarital birth wasn't stated even once by her brothers.

The characters are inheriting a chain of immoral values. If we look closely at the degeneration of one character, it clearly affects the one linked to it. While the Umakant still hopes to marry his sister to Raja of Hondour, Ramakant pulls his morals more down by introducing him to the idea of blackmailing the Raja for money in order to keep the pregnancy hush. How one fragment of getting Manik married dissolved into something more evil. The negative social influence causes subordinates to be consumed by more additional grave hunger. This bad influence is like cancer which once triggered invades the rest of the good cells. One bad apple spoils the bunch as Benjamin Franklin once said. This is evident in the marital relationship of Rama and Ramakant. The deprivation of happiness and comfort that Ramakant failed to provide Rama negatively affects or influence her to practice an illicit relationship with Rajninth.

Tolstoy said, "All Happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." (Anna Karenina,1) In Pitale's family one's need for self-gratification outweighs the empathy for others. There is an absence of love and acceptance. There is the liberty of expression but of the tongue which slurs harsh words. Pappa, Ramakant and Umakant are aggressive with their words throughout the text. In fact, the boundaries are loose and they have open ends to vanquish the higher values blindly. There is always a space for improvement but the family members are dazed by greed. To avoid alienation, they need to sacrifice self-gratification.

"In this world, three gates lead to hell- the gates of passion, anger and greed. Released from these three qualities one can succeed in attaining salvation and reaching the highest goal." (Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 16, Verse 21). According to Bhagavad Gita, there are three bad qualities which force a person into hell. Those three qualities are passion or excessive madness for anything, anger and greed for money. Once a person gets control over these three things he can attain salvation in the end. In the play also, the madness for money, anger and feeling of hatred for each other and avarice for monetary gains forces all family members to fall into a pit of loneliness and nothingness. The unbound greed leads to self-destruction. Is there a coming back? Well! That's the journey of self-discovery.

Works Cited

- Agrawal, Beena. *The Vultures: A Tragic Satire on the Aesthetics of Cruelty against Idealism of Civility in Dramatic World of Vijay Tendulkar Explorations & Experimentations*. Aadi Publications. Jaipur. 2012, Print.
- Babu M.Sharat. *Vijay Tendulkar's Ghashiram Kotwal: A Reader's Companion* New Delhi: Asia Book Club,2003.
- Bhagwad Gita. Chapter 16, Verse 21.
- The Dhammapada Quotes (n.d.). Quotes.net Retrieved January 27, 2021, from <http://www.quotes.net/quote/46225>.
- Ojha, Uday Shankar. *Vijay Tendulkar's "The Vultures: A Study of Crude Realism in Postcolonial Perspective and Beyond in "The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar, Critical Explorations"* ed. Amarnath Prasad & Satish Barbuddhe. Sarup & Sons. New Delhi. 2008. Print.
- Tolstoy, Leo, graf, 1828-1910. *Anna Karenina*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1980
- Tapadia, Harish. *Depiction of Human Viciousness in Vijay Tendulkar's "The Vultures" in The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar, Critical Explorations*" ed. Amarnath Prasad & Satish Barbuddhe. Sarup & Sons. New Delhi. 2008. Print.
- Tendulkar, Vijay. *Collected Plays in Translation*. New Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks, 2004. Print.