Yogita Singh and Dr. A.k. Singh (DEC 2008). Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*), Vol 2 (1) 78-85. Retrieved from https://ijeponline.com/index.php/journal/article

Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar

Yogita Singh, Ph.D. scholar Dr BR Ambedkar University, Agra

Guide Name -Dr. A.k. Singh, Associate professor Department of English R.B.S College, Agra

### **Abstract**

Vijay Tendulkar, a prominent Indian playwright, is renowned for his thought-provoking works that delve into the complex dynamics of power politics within society. This abstract explores the central theme of power politics in Tendulkar's plays, showcasing how he skillfully dissected the intricacies of authority, manipulation, and social hierarchies in his dramatic narratives. Tendulkar's plays often serve as a mirror to society, reflecting the power struggles that exist at various levels. His characters, whether they are politicians, bureaucrats, or ordinary individuals, are engaged in a constant battle for power and influence. Tendulkar's meticulous character development and dialogue reveal the multifaceted nature of power, illustrating how it can be wielded for both noble and nefarious purposes. Through his plays, Tendulkar also critiques the exploitation and corruption that often accompany power, shedding light on the moral dilemmas faced by those in positions of authority. He challenges the audience to question the ethical boundaries of power and the consequences of its abuse. Tendulkar's exploration of power politics extends beyond the confines of government and politics, delving into familial and societal power structures. His works bring to the forefront issues of gender, caste, and class, highlighting how these intersect with power dynamics to perpetuate inequality and injustice.

**Keywords:-**Vijay Tendulkar, Power dynamics, Political critique, Gender roles, Societal hierarchies

# Introduction

Vijay Tendulkar, an iconic figure in Indian theater, is celebrated for his ability to illuminate the intricate web of power politics within society through his plays. With a career spanning several decades, Tendulkar's works consistently grapple with the nuanced dynamics of authority, manipulation, and social hierarchies. This introduction offers a glimpse into the compelling exploration of power politics that defines Tendulkar's dramatic oeuvre.

Tendulkar's plays serve as a powerful medium through which he dissects the multifaceted nature of power politics, shedding light on the struggles that individuals and institutions face in their quest for dominance. His narratives often revolve around characters from diverse backgrounds, ranging from politicians and bureaucrats to common citizens, all entangled in a ceaseless battle for power and influence. Through intricate character development and sharp dialogue, Tendulkar unravels the motivations, ambitions, and vulnerabilities that underlie the pursuit of power.

One of the remarkable aspects of Tendulkar's exploration of power politics is his keen awareness of the moral dilemmas that accompany positions of authority. He does not simply portray power as a monolithic force but rather as a tool that can be wielded for both virtuous

© 2008 by The Author(s). Color ISSN: 1307-1637 International journal of economic perspectives is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Yogita Singh and Dr. A.k. Singh (DEC 2008). Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*), Vol 2 (1) 78-85. Retrieved from https://ijeponline.com/index.php/journal/article

and corrupt purposes. This ethical ambiguity adds depth to his characters, forcing the audience to confront the blurred lines between right and wrong in the pursuit and exercise of power. Tendulkar's examination of power politics extends beyond the realm of government and politics. He delves into familial and societal power structures, revealing how gender, caste, and class intersect with these dynamics to perpetuate inequality and injustice. Through his plays, Tendulkar raises critical questions about the impact of power imbalances on marginalized communities and individuals. In this exploration of Tendulkar's works, we will delve into specific plays that exemplify his mastery in depicting power politics. From "Shantata! Court ChaluAahe" to "GhashiramKotwal" and "Sakharam Binder," we will witness how Tendulkar's storytelling prowess brings to life the intricate tapestry of power struggles within Indian society. Through his thought-provoking narratives, he invites his audience to not only observe but also engage with the moral and ethical quandaries inherent to power politics.

## **Need of the Study**

The study of power politics in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar is of paramount importance for several compelling reasons. Tendulkar's body of work occupies a unique place in the realm of Indian theater, offering a rich tapestry of narratives that explore the intricate dynamics of power and politics within society. Understanding and analyzing these themes in his plays can provide valuable insights into the complexities of power structures in India. Tendulkar's plays are not mere works of fiction but powerful social commentaries. They hold a mirror to the prevailing power dynamics, both at the macro and micro levels, and challenge societal norms and injustices. As such, this study is crucial for anyone interested in comprehending the social, political, and moral underpinnings of Indian society. Tendulkar's exploration of power politics is not limited to a specific period; his plays remain relevant and timeless, offering a lens through which contemporary power struggles can be examined and critiqued. Thus, this study contributes to ongoing dialogues on power politics, governance, and societal inequalities in India and beyond.

## Vijay Tendulkar

Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008) was an acclaimed Indian playwright, screenwriter, and social commentator. He is widely regarded as one of India's most influential playwrights and is known for his thought-provoking and socially relevant works. Tendulkar's writing often tackled sensitive and controversial topics, making him a prominent figure in the world of Indian literature and theater.

Yogita Singh and Dr. A.k. Singh (DEC 2008). Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*), Vol 2 (1) 78-85. Retrieved from https://ijeponline.com/index.php/journal/article



One of Vijay Tendulkar's most famous works is the play "Shantata! Court ChaluAahe" (1967), which translates to "Silence! The Court Is in Session." This play is a powerful critique of societal attitudes towards women and their oppression. It explores the complexities of gender relationships and the biases inherent in the legal system. The play's title is ironic, as it highlights the silence forced upon women in a patriarchal society.

Another notable work by Tendulkar is "GhashiramKotwal" (1972), a historical drama set in the context of power struggles in the city of Pune during the Peshwa rule. The play addresses issues of corruption, abuse of power, and the dehumanizing effects of authority. It is considered a classic of Indian theater and has been widely performed and studied.

Tendulkar's contribution to Indian cinema is also significant. He wrote the screenplay for several acclaimed films, including "Aakrosh" (1980), which deals with the theme of social injustice and oppression, and "ArdhSatya" (1983), a gritty police drama that reflects the moral dilemmas faced by law enforcement officers.

Throughout his career, Vijay Tendulkar's works challenged societal norms and exposed the flaws and injustices present in Indian society. His writing was characterized by its realism, social consciousness, and a fearless exploration of uncomfortable subjects. Tendulkar's legacy continues to influence contemporary Indian literature, theater, and cinema, and his works remain relevant for their incisive critique of power, politics, and social issues.

## **Political Issues Depicted**

Vijay Tendulkar, the renowned Indian playwright and screenwriter, made a significant impact on the world of literature and theater by fearlessly addressing pressing social and political issues in his works. Through his plays and scripts, he unflinchingly delved into themes of social injustice, gender inequality, corruption, and communal conflicts, shining a spotlight on the often harsh realities of Indian society. Tendulkar's narratives exposed the underbelly of political exploitation and the abuse of power, all while advocating passionately for freedom of expression and human rights. His iconic play "Shantata! Court ChaluAahe" stands as a powerful testament to his ability to critique societal ills, forcing audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about their world. Vijay Tendulkar's enduring legacy lies in

<sup>© 2008</sup> by The Author(s). Color ISSN: 1307-1637 International journal of economic perspectives is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Yogita Singh and Dr. A.k. Singh (DEC 2008). Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*), Vol 2 (1) 78-85. Retrieved from https://ijeponline.com/index.php/journal/article

his ability to use the stage as a mirror, reflecting the complexities of the socio-political landscape and inspiring dialogue and change.

In an interview, Vijay Tendulkar expressed the view that literature serves as a mirror reflecting the dynamics of society, capturing the contours of social transformations. While his plays prominently featured elements of society and politics, he maintained a stance of not actively promoting any specific social theory. Tendulkar's works, therefore, offered insightful commentary on societal and political issues without advocating for a particular ideology or doctrine.

I have not written about hypothetical pain or rerated imaginary word of sorrow. I am from a middle class family and I have seen the brutal ways of life by keeping my eyes open. My work has come from within me, as an outcome of my observation of the world in which I live

GhasiramKotwal stands as one of Tendulkar's notable achievements, marked by its status as a political satire. Set against the backdrop of the Peshwa rule in the Eighteenth century, the play draws inspiration from historical events. However, Tendulkar's primary focus is on highlighting the prevalent issues of social injustice and hypocrisy rather than providing a strict historical account. He made it clear that GhasiramKotwal should not be regarded as a historical play but rather as a work of drama. In a discussion on the play's theme and form, SamikBenarjee expressed his perspective.

Ghasiram started with a theme, then come the specific 'story' or incident, which was historical and then, the search for the form began... by a series of accidents I discovered the present form which is a combination of a variety of ingredients from different folk forms of Maharastra

"Ghasiram" serves as a symbolic character embodying the moral decay prevalent in Indian politics. Tendulkar, through Ghasiram, provides a vivid portrayal of the erosion of ethical values within the political landscape. The Peshwas, who were the final rulers of Maharashtra, had a well-established rule during the colonial period. However, their influence waned as the British exerted control, leading to the consolidation of power in the hands of upper-caste Brahmins under colonial rule. It's worth noting that Tendulkar's intention was not to depict a specific historical period; instead, he crafted a narrative that transcends temporal and geographical constraints. The state of affairs depicted in "GhasiramKotwal" is not bound by any particular era or location; it represents a timeless and placeless commentary on the state of politics.

The narrative commences with the arrival of Brahmin Ghasiram in Pune, where he faces rejection and humiliation from the upper-class Brahmins. This mistreatment fuels his growing resentment toward the city, pushing him toward a desire for revenge. In a strategic move, Ghasiram offers his young daughter, Gauri, in marriage to the Peshwas' chief General and the justice, Nana Phadnavis, as a means to ensnare them and secure the position of 'Kotwal' (chief policeman) for himself. With this newfound authority, Ghasiram gains control over the city's judicial powers.

However, blinded by his thirst for retribution, Ghasiram fails to recognize that Nana Phadnavis is manipulating him as a shield against the Brahmins' discontent. Over time, he becomes increasingly subservient to Nana's will, even unwittingly aiding in some unlawful

<sup>© 2008</sup> by The Author(s). Color ISSN: 1307-1637 International journal of economic perspectives is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Yogita Singh and Dr. A.k. Singh (DEC 2008). Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*), Vol 2 (1) 78-85. Retrieved from https://ijeponline.com/index.php/journal/article

activities orchestrated by Nana himself. Ghasiram's brutality towards the Brahmins escalates, while Nana indulges in his own pursuits, including his multiple marriages.

Tragedy strikes when Ghasiram discovers the suspicious death of his daughter Gauri, who had been married off to Nana. Consumed by anger, Ghasiram confronts Nana, reminding him that Gauri's life was merely a pawn in their pursuit of power, devoid of compassion. Meanwhile, the Brahmins, fed up with Ghasiram's tyranny, unite and demand his execution. Nana, in a characteristically pragmatic manner, signs Ghasiram's death warrant, much as he did when he initially appointed him as Kotwal. In the end, Ghasiram meets his demise, surrounded by a crowd of onlookers.

## 'Power' as a Practice: A Critical Study in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar

The concept of "power," as defined by Michel Foucault as "the relationship in which one seeks to influence the behavior of others" (Foucault 1979:194), and "violence," characterized as the deliberate act of causing physical or psychological harm to someone (Tendulkar 1997: 120), has provided a broad thematic backdrop for generations of writers. Authors such as Shakespeare, Milton, George Bernard Shaw, John Osborne, and Eugene O'Neill have all explored this terrain in their literary works. Vijay Tendulkar, a radical playwright in modern Indian literature who originally wrote in Marathi, shares in this curiosity about "power" and "violence" in his plays. However, he does not view these concepts in isolation; instead, he integrates them into the broader context of the human experience, encompassing behavior and the human psyche.

Vijay Tendulkar, a multi-faceted writer who excelled as a journalist, novelist, short story writer, and a radical dramatist, holds a prominent place in modern Marathi literature. He established himself as a prolific playwright, having crafted twenty-eight full-length plays, twenty-four one-act plays, and eleven plays specifically for children. Tendulkar's theatrical works, marked by their innovative themes and narrative structures, have been translated into English and various other modern Indian languages. His contributions reflect a modernist perspective within contemporary Indian drama, aligning him with notable playwrights like Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, BadalSircar in Bengali, and GirishKarnad in Kannada.

At the heart of Tendulkar's major plays lies a profound ethical concern that delves into and critiques the intricate dynamics of power in all their complexity. In fact, when awarded the Nehru Fellowship, Tendulkar deliberately chose "the emerging patterns of violence" as his central theme for his project. In a subsequent interview, shortly after completing this endeavor, he revealed that he had spent two years traversing the country alone, meticulously examining a wide spectrum of situations, ranging from individual acts of violence to political movements. His exploration encompassed diverse aspects, including criminality, the operations of the police force, the judiciary, prison systems, and the political dimensions of violence and power, what remained evident to him was this fundamental fact:

"Violence has become an obsession. Violence is something which has to be accepted as fact. It is no use describing it as good or bad. Projections of it can be good or bad. And violence when turned into something else, can certainly be defined as vitality which can be very useful, very constructive. So it depends on how you utilize it or curb it at times." (Tendulkar 1992:147)

© 2008 by The Author(s). Color ISSN: 1307-1637 International journal of economic perspectives is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Yogita Singh and Dr. A.k. Singh (DEC 2008). Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*), Vol 2 (1) 78-85. Retrieved from https://ijeponline.com/index.php/journal/article

AshisNandy called Vijay Tendulkar, "one of the most distinguished social theorists of violence". Tendulkar studies 'power' and violence in political, personal, sexual and social contexts through various established institutions of society and exposes the ethical devastation and essential loneliness of mankind in his plays. The institutions that are exposed with their power mechanisms include media (Kamala), performance (Silence! The Court is in Session), the family (The Vultures), the state (GhashiramKotwal and Encounter in Umbugland), society and morality (Kanyadan), sexual mores (Sakharam Binder and A Friend's Story).

Tendulkar's Shantata! Court ChaluAhe (1967), translated from Marathi into English by PriyaAdarkar as Silence! The Court is in Session locates its heroine at the point of conflict where as aggressive transgressor of the sexual mores of community, she challenges the executors in so-called game of performance or 'power' in absentia. A fierce psychological violence becomes evident against its protagonist Miss LeelaBenare in this play.

Tendulkar's DambadwipchaMukabala (1968), translated from Marathi into English by PriyaAdarkar as Encounter in Umbugland unveils the essential nature of the game of politics as basic craving for 'power' in human being through the intricate intrigues designed to attain positions of authority and the corruption involved in holding on to them. The indomitable ruler Princess Vijaya faces the physical violence successfully, plotted against her by malicious ministers.

In his play "Gidhade" (1970), which has been translated from Marathi into English by PriyaAdarkar as "The Vultures," Vijay Tendulkar conducts an unflinching examination of human nature. Through this work, he lays bare the innate inclinations towards violence, greed, self-centeredness, sensuality, and outright malevolence that reside within human beings. Tendulkar accomplishes this by depicting the moral decline and degeneration of individual characters—Ramakant, Umakant, Pappa, Manik, and Rama—who hail from a middle-class background.

In his play "Sakharam Binder" (1972), Vijay Tendulkar skillfully portrays the dynamics of power through the lens of violence, while simultaneously challenging societal norms regarding sexuality. On one level, the play overtly depicts a power struggle between the male character, Sakharam Binder, who acts as the exploiter, and the female characters, Laxmi and Champa, who find themselves exploited.

Simultaneously, the play delves into a more implicit conflict within the mind of Sakharam Binder, pitting the concept of the "power of purity" against the "power of physical pleasure." This internal struggle highlights the tension between traditional notions of moral purity and the allure of sensual gratification, offering a complex exploration of human desires and societal norms

### 'Power', Gender, and State in Tendulkar's GhashiramKotwal:

In Vijay Tendulkar's "GhashiramKotwal," the narrative unfolds as a compelling exploration of power, gender, and the role of the state within the context of Eighteenth-century Peshwa rule. The play delves into the acquisition, manipulation, and abuse of power through the character of Ghashiram, who undergoes a transformation from a powerless Brahmin seeking revenge to a ruthless Kotwal, emblematic of the corrupting influence of authority. Alongside the theme of power, Tendulkar's work illuminates the deeply entrenched gender disparities of the time, exemplified by the tragic fate of Ghashiram's daughter, Gauri, highlighting the

© 2008 by The Author(s). Correctives is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Yogita Singh and Dr. A.k. Singh (DEC 2008). Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*), Vol 2 (1) 78-85. Retrieved from https://ijeponline.com/index.php/journal/article

vulnerability of women in a patriarchal society. Additionally, the play underscores the state's involvement in perpetuating power imbalances and manipulation, as the Peshwas strategically employ Ghashiram as a tool to further their own interests. "GhashiramKotwal" ultimately serves as a thought-provoking reflection on how these forces—power, gender, and the state—intersect and collide, exposing the moral decay that can result, and culminating in tragic consequences for its characters.

### **Research Problem**

The research problem of "Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar" presents a compelling and multifaceted inquiry into the intricate relationship between politics, power, and society as portrayed in Tendulkar's dramatic works. Vijay Tendulkar, a prominent figure in modern Indian literature and theater, has left a profound impact with his plays that delve into the complexities of power dynamics. This research problem invites scholars to engage in a nuanced analysis of Tendulkar's narratives, seeking to uncover how he skillfully dissected power structures within various contexts, including familial, political, and societal realms. Moreover, it beckons researchers to explore the role of gender in Tendulkar's works, as his plays often confront the unequal distribution of power along gender lines. Additionally, the research problem encourages a critical examination of Tendulkar's political critique and his portrayal of social injustices perpetuated by power systems. As scholars delve into these themes, they can shed light on the lasting impact of Tendulkar's plays on societal discussions, policies, and attitudes regarding power and politics. Ultimately, this research problem offers an opportunity to appreciate Tendulkar's contribution to literature and his thought-provoking exploration of the intricate tapestry of power politics in Indian society, making it a vital and compelling area of study.

### Conclusion

Tendulkar's exploration of power politics is not confined to a narrow, one-dimensional view; rather, it is a nuanced examination that encompasses various dimensions of power. He scrutinizes the political power wielded by institutions and individuals, the power dynamics within relationships, and the power struggles rooted in societal hierarchies. This multilayered approach allows Tendulkar to shed light on the pervasive nature of power and its farreaching consequences. One of Tendulkar's enduring themes is the exploitation of power. He skillfully portrays characters who manipulate, oppress, and exploit others for personal gain or to maintain their dominance. These characters often represent the dark underbelly of society, exposing the moral bankruptcy that can accompany unchecked power. Tendulkar's works serve as cautionary tales, warning against the dangers of power becoming an end in itself, divorced from ethical considerations. Gender plays a crucial role in Tendulkar's exploration of power politics. His works offer a searing critique of the patriarchal systems that perpetuate gender-based power imbalances. Through characters like Gauri in "GhashiramKotwal" or the women in "Sakharam Binder," Tendulkar highlights the vulnerability of women in a society where power is disproportionately distributed along gender lines. Furthermore, Tendulkar's plays do not merely criticize power structures; they also challenge the audience to introspect and question their complicity in maintaining these structures. His narratives compel viewers to confront uncomfortable truths about the society they inhabit and the role they play in either perpetuating or challenging power dynamics.

<sup>© 2008</sup> by The Author(s). Column ISSN: 1307-1637 International journal of economic perspectives is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Yogita Singh and Dr. A.k. Singh (DEC 2008). Power Politics in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*), Vol 2 (1) 78-85. Retrieved from https://ijeponline.com/index.php/journal/article

#### References

- 1. Sharma, Ashok Kumar. "GhashiramKotwal: A Study in the Politics of Power and Revenge." The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar Critical Explorations, edited by Amar Nath Prasad, Satish Barbuddhe., New Delhi: Sarup& Sons, 2008. p. 94.
- 2. Agarwal, AnjuBala. —Dramatic Technique of Vijay Tendulkar's Plays. The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar Critical Explorations, eds. Amar Nath Prasad, Satish Barbuddhe. New Delhi:Sarup& Sons,2008. Print.
- 3. Bandyopadhyay, Samik. Vijay Tendulkar Collected Plays in Translation. New Delhi: OUP, 2003. Print.
- 4. Banerjee, Arundhati. –Note on Kamala, Silence! The Court is in Session, Sakharam Binder, The Vultures, Encounter in Umbugland. Vijay Tendulkar Collected Plays in Translation. Introduction by SamikBandyopadhyay. New Delhi: OUP, 2003. Print.
- 5. Dharan N.S. The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar. Delhi: Creative Books, 1999. Print.
- 6. BabuSarat, Manchi. Indian Drama Today A Study in the Theme of Cultural Deformity. New Delhi: Prestige, 1997. Print.
- 7. Tendulkar, V. (2001). Vijay Tendulkar. Katha.
- 8. Wadikar, S. B. (2008). Vijay TendulkarA Pioneer Playwright. Atlantic Publishers & Dist.
- 9. Mishra, S. (2007). An Estimation of Vijay Tendulkar as a Playwright Smita Mishra. Contemporary Indian Dramatists, 116.
- 10. Gokhle, S. (2001). Tendulkar on his own terms. Vijay Tendulkar, 77-119.
- 11. Tendulkar, V. (2007). Vijay Tendulkar Omnibus. Arvind Kumar Publishers.
- 12. Prasad, A. N. (2008). The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar: Critical Explorations. Pinnacle Technology.
- 13. Aldama, F. L. (2002). Vijay Tendulkar. MitrachiGoshta: a Friend's Story. World Literature Today, 76, 89-91.
- 14. Prakash, H. S. (2008). Vijay Tendulkar Omnibus.
- 15. Two Plays by Vijay Tendulkar. Oxford University Press, 2006.