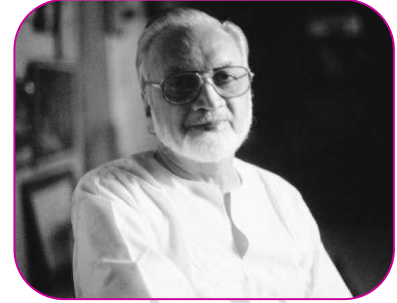




## VIJAY TENDULKAR'S " THE VULTURES" : A BLOOD AND DEATH PLAY

**Dr. Bharati Patnaik**

Assistant Professor , Department of English ,  
Sitabai Arts College, Akola (M.S.)



### ABSTRACT

*Vijay Tendulkar is a leading playwright who portrays human agonies, suffocations and cries of man. He concentrates on the middle class society. His plays deals with the alienation of individual and the struggle with contradictory surrounding. The play 'The Vultures' is an expression of the brutal and dark side of human disposition and a revelation of its inborn evil tendencies like violence, wickedness, selfishness, greed etc. Even the title of the play signifies the unpleasant atmosphere. The play revolves round the Pitale family. The words and action of all the members of the Pitale family except Rama and Rajaninath are full of savagery. Their sole objective in their life is to search inhuman tricks to cheat people. This article aims to show that hoe modern civilization increases the desires and instincts that jeopardize individual as well as social health. As a playwright, Vijay Tendulkar unravels this social sickness in his dramas.*

**KEYWORDS:** leading playwright , Pitale family , human agonies, suffocations.

### INTRODUCTION :

Vijay Tendulkar is considered a controversial playwright for his plays such as Ghasiram Kotwal, Sakharam Binder, Silence! The court is in session, The Vultures, etc. These Plays have created a storm and an intellectual debate in society. The Vultures (Gidhade) was actually written years before it was produced(1970) and published (1971). It shocked the conservative sections of Marathi people with its naturalistic displays of sex and violence. The title attracts many and thoughts provoking of the rationale behind this title selection by the writer. Tendulkar has once said in this context –“The paradoxical quality of human nature is not only the rejection of their evil mentally, but also the exhibition of manipulated outward behavior. Outwardly they they are saints, but inwardly they are sinners and sadists.”

The play is about a middle-class family, the Pitales. It presents the ego clash between Hari Pitale(Pappa) and his brother Sakharam. Hari Pitale betrays his brother and misleads him mischievously. He misuses his position as an elder brother. He is given to foul, corrupt and deceitful means. His boundless propensity for greed creates havoc in his family. He values everything from material point of view and his behavior creates a suffocating want of social mores, respectable moral values and humane approach. Ramakant, Umakant and Manik are his legitimate children. Rama is Ramakant's wife. Rajaninath is Hari's illegitimate son who lives in a garage. Pappa has no love and affection for his sons. His children also have no respect, regard and love for their father. Ramakant is a dominant character and an alcoholic, who fails as a husband to make Rama, a mother. He spent twenty two years impotently. The relationship between Rama and Rajaninath is called as a cordial relationship. Rama has only one request to Rajaninath that she wants to be a mother. So, she keeps illicit relationship with him only for the sake of attaining motherhood. Manik is the only daughter of Pappa. Her smoking, drinking, violent language and repulsive behavior reveal her hysteric personality. She is complete contrast to Rama. She wants only money and marital enjoyment. Ramakant, Umakant and Manik attack their father to grab money from him. They drive away their father and

plan to kill him. "The Vultures" is about the inhuman violence due to self alienation as well as due to selfishness and avarice. He wrote this play with the conviction that the vulturine instinct in man is deeply rooted. He attempted to explore the meaning of man's life victimized by selfishness, hatred, jealousy and cupidity. The vulturine nature dominating the relations of such middle-class family members is the theme of the play.

The play opens with the long song of Rajaninath, the illegitimate son of Pappa Pitale, which narrates the history of twenty-two years of the house and members of the family. He concludes the song,

Five Vultures  
On the swinging branch....  
Of her rotted hopes...  
Five...Vultures...

The Vultures is often interpreted as a horror and bloodshed drama. In the opinion of Prof. N.S.Dharan the play, "reminds one of Webster's The Duchess of Malfi. It is replete with violent imagery, consisting of blood, eeriness, and mad raving." The resemblance is there, at least, in the avaricious attitude of the brothers Ramakant and Umakant towards Manik, their sister. Ramakant, the elder one, resembles much the cardinal. Treacherous, malicious, heinous, pitiless, he is wickedness at its crudest and obscene best. Umakant, the younger one, depends much on him like Ferdinand in 'The Duchess of Malfi'. He is the butt of Ramakant's regular abuses and sultry derogations :

"Get out of here ! Trying to bloody frighten me,  
You bastard! Bloody gnat! Half -cooked bastard."  
Stupid bloody bastard ! Bloody swine! Muckworm !

He in turn receives scolding retaliation from Umakant, who holds him responsible for bringing shame on the family. To him Ramakant is; Bloody animal! Swindler ! Bloody dupe! They both are quite stingy towards Manik and approach her as roughly and sadistically to her. The following instance is apt to show the crassness of relation between them—

( enter Manik. She has had her bath. A towel is wrapped round her shoulders. For the rest...she is wearing a blouse and a petticoat.)

Manik : (catching hold of Umakant's neck). Who you are calling a cow, Umaya? You're not worth four paise yourself! Mind your tongue, I'm telling you. Don't run away because I'm a woman!

Umakant : (freeing his neck and hitting her on the buttocks). You...a woman?

Ramakant : What is the evidence?

Manik : You bastards! You've no shame! Bloody ruffians!

Umakant : (mincing about like a woman, one finger on his cheeks). We don't go for picnics with anyone...

Ramakant : Or stay the night with them, either!

Umakant : (picking up the bottle from the side-table). Nor do we keep those pills in our purse.

Manik : (snatching the bottle out of Umakant's hands).You've been dipping into my purse, you swine!

Ramakant : So? Is it only that Hondue fellow who's allowed to dip into things? Eh! Brother? How's that?

Manik : (turning towards Ramakant and pushing at his face). Worm's rot your mouths, yu bastards!

Umakant : The whole town' shouting it!Did'nt you two get drunk the other night? In that room at the Majestic Hall? And make a scene ?

(He pulls her towel. She screams).

The cruelty of both the brothers doesn't stop here. When they sense that Manik is pregnant they conspire of blackmailing the Raja of Hondur, her lover,and thus to extort huge money from him. Lest she should ruin their plan informing the Raja of their ill intents they leg- fracture Manik, closet her, day dream, and dance dead drunk. Their short-lived merry- making , however , flicks off with the telephonic news of the Raja's heart attack. Almost mad, they pounce on poor Manik. Ramakant crosses all limits of indecency. He kicks her deep on the belly and blood-aborts her :

Ramakant: An idea, dammit! Let's abort him! Let's knock him, bloody out!Let's kick him out. A bastard breed, dammit—come on , brother. Come on ! Let's finish off the Raja's bloody offspring. First come on! Let little Manik scream till the bloody bursts! How she'll scream, dammit. What a bloody riot! Knock him out! Hides the Raja in her belly, bloody Manik! Come on !

( They both start to make a weaving exit).

Bastard bloody breed! Traitor's brat! Knock him out! Finish him!

Umakant :stopping him forcibly). Stop.(Drinks a little). I've no football practice. You'll be able to kick.( Laughs in his throat).

Ramakant : Come on. I'll give such a kick, he'll fly up to the bloody skies...Come on...

( They exit, weaving about, muttering, drunkenly calling out to Manik. You can hear them raving off stage. Then there is a rapping on a door... Kicks and blows on it. 'Manik, open the door! Open, the door, Manik!. All this rises to a crescendo. Then in a moment , Manik screaming terrifying, comes half crawling down the stairs. One leg in plaster. Her white sari is soiled with blood).

This is the top gruesome and hideous scene in the play. The wrong doer is later on paid in the same coin. Manik attempts at trick –aborting Rama by rubbing lemon and ash on her parts, and sneaks pervert pleasure from this vengeful gesture :

I've done it... I've done as I planned... I cut thelemon ..I rubbed the ash. Seven times, on my loins and stomach! It's going to abort ..sister-in-law's baby's going to abort... Ramya's brat's going to abort...It won't live. It won't live!

When Tendulkar was asked why there are scenes of atrocity and bizarre sadism in "Vultures" such as kicking a pregnant woman in the belly. Tendulkar reacts – "In Gidhade, the cruelty is great because it deals with an exceptional family. As for what you call perversion, let us accept that human existence is full of it. We shut our eyes for it...I know many people who enjoy torturing their wives, it can be physical or mental. They are outwardly decent folks and you don't suspect they have their dark side. So, when I deal with masochism or homosexuality, I am drawing your attention to something near you."

Sin, sexuality, and savageness dominate the plot of "The Vultures". Paapa Pitale , Ramakant, Umakant etc. are the scum of the society sunk in immorality. As M. Sarat Babu observes,"It seems that these human vultures get as much intoxicated through resorting to violence as through drinking liquor." Of course there is intriguing violence in the play, and the root cause of this violence is money—money unlimited.

The relation between Rajaninath and Rama is the "redeeming feature in the morbid and claustrophobic atmosphere of the family. Rama is a sensitive, naturally kind and good hearted individual but she is helpless, submissive, an innocent dove among the vultures. Her illicit relationship with her brother-in-law evokes the question of morality. The sexual aspect of their association is only their true love. Rama wants to fulfill her desire to become a mother through him. So, she keeps illicit relation with Rajaninath. It is different relationship from the other members of the family. He closely watches the painful condition of Rama in the house of vultures. He pours out his feelings through his monologues.

As regards Father-son relationship in the play, it is hopelessly degenerate. The sons Ramakant and Umakant are born with menacing propensity for property. In their callousness they are far ahead of Paapa. Even upset, he is biased and half-dead with fear in their company :

"You're devils, you pimps! You're going to kill me! You're going to murder me... murder! I don't want to die ! don't want to ! I'm not going to! I'll become a ghost. I'll sit on your chests! Murderers!"

To sum up, "The Vultures" is a nicely conceived play. To use Keki N. Daruwalla's words, the play is 'a vultures eye-view of what the vultures sees'. Tendulkar has a rare and real insight into the matters of socio-ethical and moral concern, 'The Vultures' proves it.

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