

Vijay Tendulkar's Play *The Vultures* in the Light of *Rasa* Theory

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Most of the students of Indian art and literature tend to imitate the Western trends of beauty and aestheticism. Due to the influence of the Western education, we seek guidance from the works of Aristotle, Horace and Longinus and forget our own entire philosophical and artistic traditions, which are in no way inferior to any other source of knowledge about art and craftsmanship. Whether it is Indian dance, poetics, or dramaturgy, it has direct or indirect relation with the realm of metaphysics. According to Bharata Muni, it is *rasa* which is both the 'seed' as well as 'the fruit of the arts'. (Mukerjee 91) *Rasa* which literarily means flavour is also the source of aesthetic pleasure. According to Indian tradition it is not only love and laughter, mirth and attractiveness, which aesthetically attracts us but other 'repulsive' emotions and feelings like terror, fury, and disgust, can also yield us *rasa* if these are presented in an artistically delightful manner.

Vijay Tendulkar is among the few modern Indian dramatists who wrote successful plays on major social problems in India. The main theme which recurs time and again in his plays is the theme of violence, anger, and disgust. In the very early period of his dramatic career he earned for himself the name of an angry young man from media and multitudes. His plots are mainly based on the practicalities of life than the romantic love stories. He seems to acknowledge the presence of *krodha* and *bhaya bhava* as the essential moods among common human beings in their day-to-day material and practical lives. *Raudram rasa* is the presiding *rasa* in Tendulkar's dramas. Anger and fury are the feelings or *bhavas* which get derived from the *tamas guna* whose expressions are ignorance, imbalance, and inertia. *Tamas*, which is one of the three *gunas*, contains all the negative attitudes and sentiments, such as fury, fear, and disgust. Thus the three main *rasa*, *raudra*, *bhayanaka*, and *bibhatsa* are also attributed to *tamas*. And it is these three *rasas*, which I will try to bring forth in Tendulkar's writing.

Among the various dramas of Vijay Tendulkar, *The Vultures*, has the maximum scenes of fury and anger present in it. In ancient times the *raudram rasa* had been associated with the subhuman beings like *asuras*, *dhanavas*, and *rakshasas*. In this modern drama Tendulkar relates his characters with the flesh eating creatures. The very name of the play suggests the cruelty and violence present in it. I will try to analyze the first act of this play in the light of *rasa* theory.

In the opening of the play, Rajninath, one among the only two compassionate and kindhearted characters, exposes the whole theme of the play through his expository poem. He uses the words like beast, leper, mangy dog, hell, and death for his half-brothers and his father. The whole of the family except Rajninath and his sister-in-law, Rama, is a vicious bunch of vultures, who most of the time live their lives under the feeling of *bhaya* (terror), of each other. They are shown attacking each other most inhumanly. There are no such feelings of love, brotherhood, or filial gratitude, as is desirable in a compact family like theirs. In his long and expository poem, Rajninath describes the family as:

"Not a home, but a hole in a tree
Where vultures lived
In the shape of men.

A haunting burning ground
Surrounded by evil ghosts.” (Tendulkar 204).

While narrating the event when Rajninath was ignored and provided with no food to satisfy his hunger for many days, the ‘saint-like’ Rajninath got furious and tried to revolt. His fury is depicted in accordance with *raudra rasa* by Tendulkar when he says

“I’ll kill them all!

I’ll cut off their heads!

As goat’s is chopped to mince and eat” (Tendulkar 204).

In Tendulkar’s plays most of the violent scenes are peculiarly presented on the stage. There are certain exceptions where he makes his characters narrate these events. In one of the events Ramakant, the eldest son in the family, narrates how he injured his family servant who had only come to ask for his salary. “Blood streamed from the fellow’s mouth. Must have lost one or the two teeth. Well, they’d have fallen out anyway.” (Tendulkar 210). While narrating the episodes of cruelty committed by him, he does not feel any type of guilt or remorse. He takes pride while unfolding his violent deeds.

In the mock fight to frighten their father, Ramakant and Umakant attack each other violently in order to crush their father in between.

“RAMAKANT. Fine one you are to kill me! I’ll bash your bloody brains out! Filthy bloody bastard! Let him go Manik. Let go him!

UMAKANT. Manik let me go...” (Tendulkar 228).

They knock their father down. “*There is a gash on papa’s head, from which blood is streaming.*” (228). *Raudra* which is represented by red colour, is many times spilled in the form of blood, during the first act of the play; sometimes in the form of their servant’s blood, sometimes their father’s, and in other acts, their sister Manik’s, whom the two brothers attack. The same bloody scene gets repeated at the end of the play when Rama’s foetus gets aborted by the revengeful act of Manik’s witchcraft.

Bhaya rasa, which is the *rasa* of horror and fear, one among the *tamas guna* is present in abundance in the play. All the family members in the play *The Vultures* live in a constant fear of each other. It is Hari Pitale, the father and his daughter Manik who are always fearful of other members of the family. They think that they will be any time attacked and killed by Ramakant and Umakant. Manik and Hari Pitale find no reason to join their hands against others because they themselves take part in the plots and schemes against each other. All the members of the family keep on changing parties in order to save their individual lives.

Manik keeps always the door of her room locked during her sleep.

“MANIK. Ha! So should I keep it open, should I? So you can come and strangle me, all of you?” (Tendulkar 207).

She thinks that she is still alive because she is careful enough; nonetheless others are always in search of a suitable chance to kill her.

MANIK. I was careful. That’s what saved me! I just refused my medicine. I wouldn’t even drink water. That’s what saved me. I never slept. Even in the dark, I never closed my eyes for a second. That’s how I survived.” (Tendulkar 208).

Bibhatsa rasa (flavour of disgust), which also springs forth from *tamas guna* has also been variously made use of by the dramatist. Hari Pitale, the father of the family, who experiences a feeling of disgust to have such children who are always ready to kill him. But we know that he himself is not a saint. He has an illegitimate son in the person of Rajninath, who has never been acknowledged their own relation by the family. Hari Pitale has also duped his

own brother for material gains. His sons are following his own footprints. He feels it disgusting to have children like his own.

“PAPA. My stupidity... yes! To produce bastards like you!” (Tendulkar 211).

In return his own sons feel it loathsome to have such a man as their father.

“UMAKANT. A mangy dog would have made much a batter father!

RAMAKANT. That’s right! Bravo, brother.” (Tendulkar 213)

When we scrutinize Vijay Tendulkar’s most of the plays in the light of *rasa* theory we come to know that he is basically the playwright of fury (*krodha*), terror (*bhaya*), and disgust (*jugupsa*). He mostly weaves his plots and produces his characters in accordance with the *tamas guna*, which occupies all the *rasa* and *bhava* present in his plays.

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