



# Violence, Trauma, and the Human Psyche: A Psychosocial Reading of Vijay Tendulkar's Stagecraft

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## How to Cite this Article:

Rajasekar, S. (2026). Violence, Trauma, and the Human Psyche: A Psychosocial Reading of Vijay Tendulkar's Stagecraft. International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management, <i>02</i>(03).

<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i3.161>

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## Abstract

The theatre of Vijay Tendulkar engages with the darker aspects of human behaviour, studying the ways in which violence and trauma impact social and psychological realities. This paper presents a psychosocial interpretation of the world of Vijay Tendulkar's theatre, examining the manner in which individual suffering is inextricably linked with structural inequality, gendered power relations, and cultural conditioning. Through a close analysis of key plays—Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe, Ghashiram Kotwal, Sakharam Binder, and Kamala—the paper engages with the manner in which fear, power, and emotional dislocation are enacted as both individual experience and social phenomenon. Using the frameworks of psychological realism, trauma studies, and social critique, this paper will demonstrate that the plays of Vijay Tendulkar function as a mirror to human vulnerability, laying bare the fragile psyche in conditions of coercion and inequality.

## Keywords:

Vijay Tendulkar; Psychosocial Criticism; Violence and Trauma; Gendered Oppression; Power and Domination; Indian Modern Theatre



## Introduction

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the leading modern Indian playwrights who unflinchingly exposes the hard reality of everyday life. His theatre world is filled with characters who live life amidst repressive systems, gender equations, and moral contradictions. However, what sets Tendulkar's theatre apart is his deep psychological insight—a faculty that allows one to dramatize not only actions but also emotional wounds, fissures, and silences that guide human behavior. His plays force the audience to confront the hard reality that violence is not a deviation but a social inheritance, which is handed down through institutions, relationships, and ideological socialization.

A psycho-social reading of Tendulkar's oeuvre reveals the two-fold forces that propel his characters: social pressures from the outside and psychological upheavals from within. Whether it is the degradation of Miss Benare, the authoritarian ascendancy of Ghashiram, or the psychological disintegration of Sakharam Binder, Tendulkar projects a reality where trauma exists latently in the substrata of usual social encounters. His characters testify to the manner in which systemic violence generates individual suffering and how the psyche resists oppression by turning it into one's very own identity.

In investigating Tendulkar's stagecraft, this research combines psychological realism with social critique, demonstrating the usage of trauma both as a catalyst for storytelling and a point of thematic identification. The plays function not only as texts but also as case studies in the complicated dynamic between individual psychology and social order. By means of this analytical approach, Tendulkar is revealed to be not merely a dramatist about social reality but a perceptive analyst of the human psyche in distress.

## Review of Literature

The literary works of Vijay Tendulkar have been widely commented upon and interpreted by scholars and literary critics, and yet, they continue to present newer horizons of interpretation. Initially, Tendulkar was perceived as a social realist who portrayed the violence inherent in everyday Indian society. His structural interests in issues of caste, class, and gender have been more widely commented upon by critics such as Dhanavel (2011) and Dharwadker (2005).

In later studies, a more overtly feminist approach was taken, with a focus on plays such as Sakharam Binder, Kamala, and Silence! The Court is in Session, in which the theme of the emotional and structural exploitation of women takes precedence. Scholars have drawn attention to the strong and representative portrayal of women's suffering presented by Tendulkar, particularly in the way in which patriarchal values condone emotional and psychological abuse.

In a more recent trend, the focus of scholarship on Tendulkar has moved away from the realm of social critique and towards psychological and trauma studies, placing Tendulkar within a wider paradigm of vulnerability. Scholars aligning themselves with the likes of Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth, trauma theorists, have begun to read Tendulkar's characters as victims of profound psychological trauma caused by prolonged exposure to humiliation, force, and imbalances of power. Such readings indicate that Tendulkar's plays are more than just tales of social oppression.

Despite these contributions, it seems that there is a definite lacuna in the area of combining the analysis of psychosocial issues with trauma studies on Tendulkar's works. While some critics might be delving into the area of social structures, or others into the realm of psychological states, no one has explored this conjunction of the two realms as how external violence impacts internal trauma in the works of Tendulkar.



## Objectives of the Study

The paper aims to fill the gap between the analysis of the social and the psychological interpretation of the plays of Tendulkar. This requires a multidimensional approach that investigates the mental and emotional impact of structural violence in his theater universe. The broadened objectives are:

1. To analyze the role of violence as a formative element in the characters portrayed by Tendulkar.
2. To explore the psychological aftereffects of trauma, particularly the internalization of feelings of humiliation, fear, and marginalization.
3. To study the relationship between social structures and psychological turmoil, in order to explore how power relations, gender disparity, and institutionalized corruption impact the psyche.
4. To apply trauma theory and psychosocial approaches to provide a nuanced understanding of Tendulkar's dramatic techniques.
5. To illustrate how Tendulkar's plays can be taken as psychosocial documents, which reveal the interface of individual agony and collective moral failure.
6. To illustrate the dramatic theory of Tendulkar, where his dramaturgy emphasizes vulnerability, with the mind being deeply influenced by external pressures, as well as moral hypocrisy.

With the above objectives, the research creates a framework which connects brutality in society to the psychological breakdown.

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach, grounded in literary critique, psychosocial approaches, and trauma studies. Selection of Plays for Analysis: Plays such as *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *Sakharam Binder*, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Kamala* were selected for analysis not merely for their popularity with the masses but for their depth of themes addressed, especially relating to the suffering of the human psyche as well as social oppression.

### The methodological procedure comprises:

#### Textual Analysis

The plays are analyzed for narrative elements, character development, dialogue, silences, and dramatic structuration. How Tendulkar harnesses confrontation, separation, or drama to portray trauma is also taken into consideration.

#### Psychosocial Interpret

This study uses the psychosocial approach to examine the dynamic interactions between individual psychological processes (fear, shame, guilt, anger) and social forces (patriarchy, power, hierarchy). This is used for a more integrated analysis of human behavior that is both psychological and social in origin.

#### Application of Trauma Theory

##### Trauma

Looking to trauma theorists like Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth for guidance, the methodology here applies the concepts of emotional and psychological trauma to the characters' situation using their behaviors of silence, rebellion, submission, and breakdown.

Social, cultural, and historical contexts of the plays are examined to understand how Tendulkar places his characters in real-world systems of oppression. This is where the social systems of oppression create traumas.



## Comparative Character Study

### Comparing

Characters in various plays are contrasted with one another in order to discern some psychological similarities, thus making it possible for the study to reveal that there is consistency in the themes of violence and conflict that Tendulkar is concerned with.

In integrating both approaches, the paper offers a complex interpretation of the social-critical qualities of Tendulkar's stagecraft as well as its psychological depth.

### Violence as a Social Inheritance

Tendulkar offers violence not merely as an incident but as a social phenomenon that is carried down through generations. This is evident in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, where the political setup breeds men who believe that power equals violence. Ghashiram's ascent into power is reminiscent of the psychological change where his own debasement transforms cruelty, indicating that trauma begets perpetrators of more violence.

### Trauma and Internal Conflict in *Silence! The Court is in Session*

It's through Miss Benare's breakdown that the "shaming power of social communities" is revealed: "Communal disapproval, often linked with moral censure," as Walker says, "can

- character assassination
- gendered humiliation
- denial of autonomy
- exposure of her personal life

Benare's silence is strength, not weakness, and it is her psychological shield. This breakdown represents the destruction of individualism by collective cruelty. This trial is a long metaphor for the way that suffering is converted into entertainment by society. This psychological trauma is the aftermath of social cruelty that takes the form of psychological destruction.

Tendulkar constructs a world where domestic spaces become sites of emotional conflict. Sakharam's relationships with women reflect deep-rooted insecurity, emotional instability, and unprocessed trauma. His need for control arises from a fear of vulnerability, revealing a psyche shaped by patriarchal values. The women, on the other hand, display resilience shaped by suffering. Their submission is not surrender but a survival mechanism. Through these characters, Tendulkar shows how gender violence becomes internalized, leading to complex psychological scars.

### Trauma and Exploitation in *Kamala*

*Kamala* exposes how the media and domestic patriarchy reproduce trauma. Kamala's silence is the result of lifelong exploitation, while Sarita experiences emotional trauma within her marriage. Tendulkar contrasts:

- **Kamala's physical and psychological trauma**
- **Sarita's emotional and domestic trauma**

Both women exist within systems that refuse them agency. The play highlights the commodification of suffering and how trauma becomes an object of consumption for public entertainment or domestic authority.



## The Human Psyche Under Social Pressure

Across his works, Tendulkar shows that psychological trauma is shaped by:

- humiliation
- neglect
- exploitation
- power imbalance
- emotional suppression

Characters in his plays do not merely suffer; they internalize their oppression, resulting in altered behaviours—submission, aggression, silence, rebellion, or breakdown. Tendulkar demonstrates that the psyche functions as a battlefield where personal desires clash with social constraints. The result is a dramatic world dominated by emotional turbulence and psychological vulnerability.

### Findings

From the psychosocial analysis, the study identifies the following:

1. **Violence is systemic**, not individual; characters reflect societal structures.
2. **Trauma operates silently**, influencing behaviour, decisions, and emotional responses.
3. Tendulkar's stagecraft relies heavily on **psychological realism**, using silence, confrontation, and emotional rupture to reveal the inner life of characters.
4. Gendered trauma is central to his plays, exposing the mental effects of patriarchy.
5. His plays continue to be relevant in contemporary discussions on mental health, emotional abuse, and institutional violence.

### Conclusion

Vijay Tendulkar's works remain relevant as he exposes the psychological aftermath of surviving violent and unjust social systems through his plays. His works showcase that trauma is not an individual experience but a collectively created phenomenon through gender roles, corruption, and power relations. An individual's psychological disconnections, silence, or collapses provide key openings into a collectively disturbed state of affairs since individual suffering cannot be isolated from the social context that creates it.

A psychosocial analysis of Tendulkar's body of work is that of violence being both the cause and the effect of something, causing pain to the individual as well as moulding their attitude toward the world around them. His mastery of stagecraft reveals to the individual the process by which human beings absorb aggression, perpetuate oppression, and justify brutality. Even in instances where characters tend to be ambivalent or cruel, there is an invisible hurt that is to be discovered behind their behaviour, which is revealed by Tendulkar through his works.

Ultimately, however, the true drama of Tendulkar's legacy is his melding of psychological insight with social commentary to create works of drama that are both psychologically disturbing and intellectually engaging. Through his examination of the topics of trauma, vulnerability, and human frailty, he forces readers, in turn, to reassess the complexities of the relationship between social forces and the self. In a world that is seeing increasingly more social forces, gender-based violence, as well as emotional fragility, it is important to underscore that the observations of Tendulkar continue to be very relevant.



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