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6. Woman Exploitation in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court Is In Session*Prof. Sagar S. Vyas
H.K. B.B.A. College, Ahmedabad.

Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to study the woman exploitation as presented by Vijay Tendulkar in his play, *Silence! The Court Is In Session*. It also focuses on the woman plight in the male dominated society. He was one of the most influential Indian playwrights along with Girish Karnad, Habib Tanbeer and Badal Sircr. He has fertilized the Indian English literary soil with his literary outputs. He has presented content and form in a new way and also has cast the lights on the burning issues of contemporary Indian society in a novel way in his plays.

Key Words: woman, plight, male dominated society

Woman Exploitation in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court Is In Session*

[1] Introduction

Vijay Tendulkar was born on 6th January 1928 and died on 19th May, 2008. He was one of the most influential Indian playwrights along with Girish Karnad, Habib Tanbeer and Badal Sircr. He has fertilized the Indian English literary soil with his literary outputs. He has presented content and form in a new way and also has cast the lights on the burning issues of contemporary Indian society in a novel way in his plays.

[2] His Literary Production

During his life he has produced many literary works in various genres. He wrote plays, novels, short stories and also translated many books. His major plays are; Gruhastha (Householder) (1947), Shrimant (The Rich) (1956), Mānoos Nāwāche Bet (An Island Named 'Man') (1958), Thief! Police!, Bāle Miltāt (1960), Gidhāde (The Vultures) (1961), Pātlāchyā Poriche Lagin (Marriage of a Village Mayor's Daughter) (1965), Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe (Hindi: Khāmosh! Adālat Jāri Hai) (Silence! The Court is in Session) (1967), Ajgar Ani Gandharwa (A Boa Constrictor and "Gandharwa"), Sakharam Binder (Sakhārām, the Book-Binder) (1972), Kamalā ("Kamala") (1981), Mādi [in Hindi], Kanyādān (Giving Away of a Daughter in Marriage) (1983), Anji Dāmbadwichā Mukābalā (Encounter in Umbugland), Ashi Pākhare Yeti (Hindi: Panchi Aise Aate Hain) (Thus Arrive the Birds), Kutte Safar/Cyclewallah (The Cyclist) (1991), The Masseur (2001), Pāhije Jātiche (It Has to Be in One's Blood), Jāt Hi Poochho Sādhu Ki (Ask a Fakir's Lineage), Mājhi Bahin (My Sister), Jhālā Ananta Hanumanta ("Infinite" Turned "Hanumanta"), Footpāyrichā Samrāt (Sidewalk Emperor), Mitrāchi Goshta (A Friend's Story) (2001), Anand Owari [A play based on a novel by D. B. Mokashi], Bhāu MurārRāo, Bhalyākākā, Mee Jinkalo Mee Haralo (I won, I Lost), His Fifth Woman [in English] (2004), Bebi and Mita ki kahani "(Mita's Story).

[3] **Woman Exploitation in the Play, *Silence! The Court Is In Session***

With the publication of a play *Silence! The Court Is In Session* in 1967 Vijay Tendulkar earned his rich name in the world of Indo English literature. The present play was originally written in Marathi and later translated into English by Praya Adarkar and staged in 1971 at museum Theatre, Madras and later translated into Bengali language. Through the dramatic irony and satire, the playwright portrays how the young woman of thirty-four is victimized to conventions and shameful hypocrisy of the middle-class male-dominated society. With the course of the play she undergoes deep mental agony when she is betrayed by the other members of the group.

In the present play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* runs into three Acts and the playwright introduces a theatre group called 'The Sonar Moti Tenement(Bombay) Progressive Association' come to a suburban village near Bombay to stage their play on the Trial of American President Lydon B. Johnson on the charge of producing atomic weapons. In the play, Tendulkar depicted the plight of a young educated urban woman in male dominated society. A traditional male-dominated middle class society is reluctant to any social change. Benare, the heroine of the play is in search of a happy life after a few frustrations in her life. But society does not allow her to live quietly. Benare is an educated woman of about 34 years. She is a school teacher by profession. She loves life and is full of spirits. She is proud of her performance as a teacher and feels that her life is her own and no one has got the right to interfere in it. She is a member of an amateur dramatic association which stages plays in different places to create public consciousness on some social or sociological issues.

Silence! The Court is in Session presents a play within a play where Benare, as the accused is tried for an imaginary crime of infanticide. Though the trial is conducted in game like and non-serious manner, it exposes the past life of Benare and authenticates the feeling of superiority of men over women in Indian society. This play deals with the mental state of educated woman in a traditionally male-dominated Indian society. The so-called social workers like Kashikar and his troupe show social concern for social reform and Tendulkar attacked them ironically and satirically throughout the play. In this play an Indian society is presented where a woman is quite suppressed and any small attempt y an woman for her freedom is highly detoriated. Tendulkar is highly artistic manner withdraw from making any statement which saves the play from being propaganda. A play, in order to be staged successfully needs to be rehearsed. The main body of the play concerns the rehearsal of a drama on the theme of a court trial of an accused on some imaginary charges.

Act-I of the play presents all preparations for such a rehearsal of a mock court. Act-I is an introduction to the main action of the real play which starts in Act-II. The play begins with the arrival of dramatic troupe in a village to stage a mock trial of a court in order to educate the rural folk about the functioning before the time of the actual performance they pal to spend the prime period of time in some sort of game like activity. The rehearsal of the play in the village suggests the main action of the play. The Act-I reveals the entire course of the drama. While engaged in conversation with Samant, Benare tells him about her experiences as popular teacher in a school. She further narrates how people around her, are jealous for which they have instituted an enquiry against her for one bit of slander. This slander related to her affair with Prof. Damley as it has been shown in the course of her trial as the accused. Arundhati Banerjee says that the accusation brought

against Benare at the beginning of the trial turns into the verdict because contemporary society cannot allow the birth of a child out of wedlock.

Tendulkar exposes the condition of women of the middle class family in Indian society. Both Benare and Mrs. Kashikar are presented as women who have fallen victims to male supremacy in Indian society. They both are not free to act independently. Benare's attempt to lead an independent life of her own has been frustrated by the group of men surrounding her during the course of the mock-trial. Her freedom has been mercilessly crushed. She Argues:

Don't' you think that maturity comes to a person only with experience? And experience comes with age, with a unusual way of life (Tendulkar: *Silence! The court is in Session*, 2004, 62).

She gradually becomes serious and depressed because all the male characters try to unravel her past life with a view of humiliating her. Even Mrs. Kashikar joins her hands with them to expose her. When she visited Kashikar on birthday he listens the communication:

It is a sin to be pregnant before marriage. It would be still more immoral to let such a woman teach, in such a condition. There is no alternative. This woman must be dismissed (Tendulkar: *Silence! The court is in Session*, 2004, 70).

It is further revealed that Benare is carrying the child of Prof. Dambley in her womb, Kamal discloses the fact that Benare in her youth, was in love with her maternal uncle and when that affair ended in fiasco, she attempted suicide. Further it is disclosed in the court that after her pregnancy through Prof. Dambley, Benare attempted to get married to anyone to save herself from defamation. Sukhatme points out to the court that man is liable to error and youth leads a person astray. He appeals to the court to keep this in view and take a lenient view of his client's alleged crime and show mercy to her for humanity's sake.

Man is the last analysis, prone to error. Youth leads a person astray. Let the terrible crime that the accused has committed and is committing be regarded with mercy. However, Benare admits all her crimes. She refers to her love affair with her maternal uncle and Prof. Damble. But both the men had deceived her. She confesses:

It isn't love at all..it's worship! But it was the same mistake. I offered my body on the altar of my worship. And intellectual god took the offering.... and went his way (Tendulkar: *Silence! The court is in Session*, 2004, 75).

She pathetically states:

He wasn't god. He was a man for whom everything was of the body, for the body; That's all; (Tendulkar: *Silence! The court is in Session*, 2004, 75).

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[3] Conclusion

To conclude
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Unable to bear the bitter experience of her frustrated love Benara feels weak and mental agony and finally cries out. Yet no one comes forward to help her and soothe her. Her own family pay her but they simply observe the whole scene with indifference. She then tells the Judge that she wants to live for the sake of 'my god - my whole existence'. She is very firm that she wants her body now for her son and 'he must have a mother..... a father to call his own - a house - to be looked after - he must have a good name!'

13] Conclusion

To conclude, we may say that Vijay Tendulkar has minutely observed male dominated society and has successfully presented his observations in his plays. He also throws the lights on the plight of the women. Through the present play, the playwright presents the burning issues of the Indian society.

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