



SELF REALIZATION AND THE QUEST FOR LIBERATION IN THE PLAYS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR WITH REFERENCE TO *KAMALA* AND *SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION*

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ABSTRACT

Vijay Tendulkar plays depicts the exploitation of women by their male counterparts. Tendulkar presents modern man in all his complexities. He has focused on male chauvinism, subtle, inverted and preservative relationship between men and women. The play Kamala portrays the life of two women, an ignorant woman sold in the flesh trade industry and the journalist's wife who seems to be an educated woman, being exploited by the same man for his personal benefit. Kamala's entry reveals to Sarita the selfish hypocrisy of her husband and the insignificance of her own existence. Kamala remains very subtle in her attitude of subjugating women. Though Sarita attempts to assert her identity as a woman, free from slavish subjugation of her husband, but finally she has no choice but to fall back on her traditional role-play in wedlock. Silence! The Court is in Session is a master piece of Vijay Tendulkar where he portrayed the life of a spinster school mistress Ms. Leela Benare. Though she was loyal in her work, it wasn't recognized. Infact her colleagues and troupe mates mixed her personal life with her profession and deprived her of her job which was her only means of survival. The play grapples with several problems faced by women and the forceful male supremacy who decides the fate of woman.

Key words: *Subjugation, Male Supremacy, Selfish Hypocrisy, Infanticide*

INTRODUCTION

“Good-bad, right-wrong, once you tag things like that, you lose the ability to see the complete truth.... A murderer can also be a loving father. Don't tag things. Words are insufficient to describe the picture in totality. Try not to get trapped in the dictionary meaning of words.” — Vijay Tendulkar

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Vijay Tendulkar the renowned Marathi playwright is known for his works which reflects the individual's inner and outer world. His plays depicts the cruelties metted out to women by their male counterparts. Tendulkar presents modern men in all his complexities. The nature of women and the urge for liberation is a noteworthy concept in his plays *Kamala* and *Silence! The Court is in Session*. Tendulkar has achieved a mile-stone in exploring the relationship between men and women at different levels. He has focused on men's superiority complex and shown subtle, inverted and preservative relationship between men and women.

The play *Kamala* is based on a real life incident which was published in the Indian Express exposed by Ashwin SDarin who actually bought a girl from the rural flesh market and presented her at the press conference. It portrays the life of two women, an ignorant woman purchased from the flesh trade industry and the journalist's wife who seems to be an educated woman, being exploited by a single man for his personal benefit. They have been used as a ladder for his progress. The play focuses on the female character Sarita and Kamala who fail to recognize their potential.

It revolves around the mystery surrounding Jaisingh's attitude towards women from the way he treats them. He is married to Sarita who is totally immersed in his activities and parties. He treats her as a mere object who has to blindly follow the duties of her master without any objection. Sarita is concerned about Jaisingh's attitude towards her and so takes care that nothing goes wrong in his absence. When she gets a phone call about Jaisingh's arrival she makes sure that all things are arranged in order and gets ready to welcome him. Her concern for his welfare as an Indian woman is clearly highlighted.

He performs a great social feat in bringing to focus a crime perpetrated against women. The flesh trade prevailing is exposed with the press conference where he brings proof of the woman he has bought. When Sarita enquires about the lady who had accompanied him he feels its unsafe to disclose the secret behind it. He feels that its not safe to disclose any secret to a lady. Later he tells her the truth and when enquired he states that he wanted to inform the society of such happenings. Jaisingh is delighted about his accomplishment to have bought Kamala to expose the crime committed against women. Like Sarita, Kamala also seems to be obedient to her master. Kamala was too innocent to know the realities of life. She was dressed in a shabby manner. When Sarita wanted her to change into a proper clothes Jaisingh intervened and stated that Kamala should be portrayed in the same manner as she is and that she should not insist in changing her clothes. Jaisingh's ill motive is highlighted where he is not bothered about a lady's modesty but is concerned about his own personal benefit. When Jaisingh orders Kamala to follow him she blindly follows him for the press meet unmindful

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of her attire. Kamala's entry reveals to Sarita the selfish hypocrisy of her husband and the insignificance of her own existence.

A revelation is at hand for Sarita who realizes that her husband exploited her very badly. She realized her plight when Kamala mentioned that they both should be loyal to their master who had bought them for a ransom amount. The only difference she finds is that Kamala was bought for a paltry sum, while she was sold through a huge dowry from her father at her marriage to Jaisingh. He is nothing but a slave-driver for Sarita. The only thing that happened in between them is the institution of marriage. It was Kamala who opened her eyes to the reality of her life with Jaisingh which was nothing but a socially approved slavery.

Kamala though timid by nature states that they both should remain like sisters and serve their master in best way possible. *Kamala* remains very subtle in her attitude of subjugating women. When Sarita could no longer tolerate the pessimistic nature of her husband she tries to retaliate. She bursts out to her uncle Kakasaheb stating that she no longer wishes to be a slave under the bondage of her husband. She senses an urge for liberalization, she personally feels that she should step of the clutches of wedlock and lead an independent life. Its only at the later stage she realizes her worth as an educated woman and the power which she possess. Later when she comes to know of her husband's position of being deprived of the job because of purchasing a woman from flesh trade industry she feels sorry for him. She falls back to him. Though Sarita attempts to assert her identity as a woman, free from slavish subjugation of her husband, in the final analysis she has no choice but to fall back on her traditional role-play in wedlock.

Silence! The Court is in Session is a master piece of Vijay Tendulkar where he portrayed the life of a spinster school mistress Ms. Leela Benare Ms. Leela Benare an educationist seems to be perfect in her career but seems to be a failure in personal life. The protagonist is crucified for her extreme buoyancy by her drama troupe in a mock trial. Initially she fails to understand the cunning nature of her troupe members who tried to target her for her mishap. Its only towards the end she realizes that she has been framed for the mistake which she has committed. They charge her with the crime of "infanticide". The members of the troupe give evidence against Ms. Benare for bearing in womb an illegitimate child. Sukhatme plays a dual role as the council for the accused and the prosecutor in mock trial. As the accuser's council he pleads the court to show mercy for the mistake that the accused has committed. As a prosecutor he states that the accused has committed a grave crime of unmarried motherhood. He goes on to state that according to Hindu mythology unmarried motherhood is considered to be a sin. He also states that woman is not worthy of freedom. He mentions that right from the epic period it is known that women should always be under the guidance of men and that

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they are not meant to take decision on their own. He goes on to state that women are bad decision makers and Benare stands as a suitable example for it.

The entire members blame Ms. Benare for her plight, they fail to realize or rather ignore the fact that a man has also been involved in it. Even Mrs. Kashikar, a member and wife of the troupe's head fail to sympathize with her. She in fact finds pleasure in witnessing Ms. Benare's situation and provokes other members of the troupe to give evidence against her. They try to find fault only with the woman and blindly let's go off the man who is responsible for her plight. Samant the village peasant on seeing Benare's condition feels sorry for her but still remains as a mute observer of everything. Benare's monologue is a noteworthy aspect in the entire play. It's a ringing re-affirmation of life and happiness in a play with its dark and bizarre undertones. She pours out her suppressed grief. She feels no living beings cared for others, all seem to be self-centered. Even the men whom she trusted cared only for her physique and not her feelings as a woman. Though she was loyal in her work no one seem to bother about that. She had failed twice in her life, once when she was very young and later when she grew up as a woman. She feebly uttered remembering her first love with her maternal uncle as such:

Life is a poisonous snake that bites itself. Life is a betrayal, life is a fraud. Life is a drug. Life is a drudgery.... Life is a dreadful thing (Tendulkar SCS 75).

Mentioning about her later affair with Damle, she accepts that despite being wounded once before, she made the same mistake. She fell in love with Prof. Damle as a young woman in spite of her previous failure in a love with her maternal uncle. Prof. Damle was a married man who also wanted to satisfy his bodily thirst. She was pregnant without marriage and this was the reason for her downfall both in personal and professional life.

She had requested her male counterparts to give her an identity not because she desired for safety or affiliation but it was her moral needs that she had wanted to keep intact. She was afraid of her child's future and identity. It was for her child that she let go of her dignity and shame and approached people to let her live. The members of the troupe in fact mixed her personal life with her profession and deprived her of her job her only means of survival.

Tendulkar's plays are mainly centered around women characters from the middle class society. The protagonist Benare in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and Sarita in *Kamala* try hard to win over their male counterparts. They represent the modern woman who tries to confront the male subjugated world. The main factor is that they represent the common society. The urge for liberty to prove themselves to establish their existence in this so called cultured society. All his plays revolve around the female characters.

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In the projection of life Tendulkar appears to be a detached observer neither praising nor condemning either the cruel or violent characters or the kind and tender heartedness. Tendulkar's plays are dealt on real life incidents and not imaginary one. Though he tries to stand apart from society his sympathy for the female characters is deeply expressed through mouthpiece of his characters. He stands as a remarkable writer unlike others by bringing to light the reality of life without blending any bogus or superfluous incidents.

The plays *Kamala* and *Silence! The Court is in Session* depicts Indianness and portrays the characters as one among the common lot. The play grapples with several problems faced by women and the forceful male supremacy who decides the fate of woman It also emphasizes on the incidents taking place in an Indian family or about the social issue on which people shut their eyes. It kindles a sense of guilt on those who represent the male character and sense of rethinking and reasoning power for those who represent the female characters.

Women will work out their own destinies- much better, too, than men can ever do for them. All the mischief to women has come because men undertook to shape the destiny of women (Swami Vivekananda)

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