



A STRONG WOMAN: NOT A PRODUCT OF HER CIRCUMSTANCES BUT A PRODUCT OF HER DECISIONS

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Abstract

Present paper is a deep study of Vijay Tendulkar's plays namely "Silence ! The Court Is In The Session", "Kamala" and "The Encounter In Umbugland". This paper is an attempt to present before the society that woman is not an object of recreation, she is the one who quietly bears the pangs of chauvinistic biased world but when her self-respect is at stake, she bravely wipes off her tears and makes a staircase from those bricks which are thrown at her and reaches the top and gets victory. This paper is an attempt to show that a woman is not the product of her circumstances, infact she is the product of her decisions. She bears all the odds and pangs of male dominated society silently without complaining because she has a heart of gold who forgives everything but the moment her self-respect is attacked she knows very well how to rise up and fight back. Once she is determined to gain her self-respect no one can stop her.

Keywords: biased patriarchal society, superior sex, chauvinism, women objectified, suppressed rage, rebellion, spark of agitation, gender determined social structure, self-respect, product of decision.

INTRODUCTION

A woman is the most beautiful and powerful creation of God. She can perform every role that is assigned to her in a wonderful way. Be it the role of a soft hearted mother, a caring wife, a loving daughter or be it a role of strong, intelligent and sharp queen and a powerful dictator. She fits perfectly in every role that she is expected to perform. Yet she has to face many problems in the biased male dominated society and has to face the double standards of the patriarchal world to prove her worth and capacity everytime, which she very well manages to fulfil. Maya Angelou in her poem 'Still I Rise', writes on the perfection of a woman, "You may kill me with your hatefulness. But still like

air I'll rise."(Angelou,1994). In every field women surpasses men proving her worth and ability to the world. She outdoes the so called superior sex, the masculine chauvinistic world and declares it every time that she is not the one who should be treated as a second sex. She has proved herself worthy of getting the equal respect as is given to men in this male dominated society. She is not an object of recreation and time pass in male governed society. Woman is a splendid creation of the Almighty that should be treated with respect and not to be objectified as a plaything or as a medium to fulfil lusty, selfish desires of men. "I think God made a woman to be strong and not to be trampled under the feet of men."(little Richard,2019). The present paper throws light on the aforesaid quote using the

examples of feminine world as presented in the works of the famous Marathi playwright Vijay Tendulkar.

Tendulkar's female characters enlighten the fact that power will not be given to you easily, you have to snatch it. The same is depicted in a famous quote of Beyonce Knowles, "Power is not given. You have to take it" (Dudley Georgia, 2015). In the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*, Miss Benare struggles and fights for her dignity facing all the odds courageously proving herself a free bird acting according to her own will and not being a puppet acting according to other people's wish. She believes in living life to the fullest which is clearly seen in her words as she speaks, "We should laugh, we should play, we should sing ! If we can and if they'll let us, we should dance too. Shouldn't have any false modesty or dignity. Or care for anyone! I mean it."(60-61). She is fully committed to her duties as a professional as well as she exuberantly expresses her personal desires being a woman. She clearly declares, "Who are those people to say what I can or can't do? My life is my own – I haven't sold it to anyone for a job! My will is my own. My wishes are my own. No one can kill those – no one? I'll do what I like with myself and my life? I'll decide".(58). "The play reveals the suppressed rage of the protagonist against the humiliation of womanhood, struggling against the well organised oppressive mechanism of patriarchal domination where woman hardly possess a voice of her own."(Agrawal Beena,63). The play throws light on the bitter truth that in every age the male dominated ,hypocritical patriarchal world sets forth the set of biased rules following the double standards of rules policy, one set for man and other for women. In the play, "during the mock trial, Miss Benare becomes the epitome of the apathetic oppressive mechanism struggling against the collective voice of the judge, the lawyer and the professor who represent the authority of male dominated society." (Agrawal Beena,64). Miss Benare in the play becomes stone image that is exhibited in the patriarchal male dominated world. "The suppressed rage inside Miss Benare gradually starts taking the form of a rebellion and she moves with destructive passion."(Agrawal Beena,74). She

cries out in anger, " I'll smash up all this! I'll smash it all to bits- into little bits! (93)

Similarly, the play *Kamala* enlightens the fact that in society only the male race is given the status of policy maker, keeping all absolute power in his own hands. Man subjugated the position of woman by keeping her deprived of the privileges that she is worthy of and always push back the feminine race preventing her to think for her well-being and desires. "The play *Kamala* is uncontroversially an exposition of male chauvinism that inspires sexual colonialism in Indian society. The life of *Kamala* and *Sarita* is a testimony to the fact that woman cannot think of her own spaces in gender determined social structure" (Agrawal Beena, 47). Man forces woman to look at the things from the male point of view. Vijay Kumar Sinha comments, "There is a constant conflict in the play between the social taboo of male superiority and a woman's assertion of her individuality."(Sinha,175). Woman is fighting for her rights since ages in the hypocritical male dominated chauvinistic tradition bound society which is hostile towards women and their desires. Man objectifies woman as medium to fulfil his desires and lust and takes the female race for granted. In the play *Kamala*, *Kamala* is bought from skin market in just two hundred and fifty rupees by *Jai Singh* for fulfillment of his purpose and after the work is done she is left in an asylum. Even *Sarita* has been used as a puppet in the hands of her husband *Jaisingh*. But soon she begins to protest and tries to restore her self-respect. See what *Sarita* says to *Kakasaheb*, *SARITA*: But a day will come, *Kakasaheb*, when I will stop being a slave. I'll no longer be an object to be used and thrown away. (56). *Satish Barbuddhe* says, "The men around her takes her as granted and enjoys her company. But she never hides anything. That is her real strength." (*Barbuddhe* ,124). In the play *Encounter in Umbugland*, we find how a petrified princess manages to change herself into a powerful dictator. The cabinet of ministers wanted to use *Vijaya* as a puppet queen in the hands of the ministers. They wanted to prove that in a situation of political crisis she won't be able to manage the situation on her own and considered *Vijaya* an innocent princess. However, *Vijaya* very well managed to control and

guide the state matters in comparison to male leaders, the ministers of the cabinet. It is the vulnerability of female race that gives her strength to bear the pangs of inequality of the male dominated world. According to Raquel Franco, "Vulnerability is scary but pure. In it you can find bravery." Same thing is penned down by Andrea Balt in her poem that throws light on the perfection of women. "Your weirdness will make you stronger. Your dark side will keep you whole. Your vulnerability will connect you to the rest of our suffering world. Your creativity will set you free. There's nothing wrong with you." (Balt Andrea). In the play Encounter in Umbugland, Vijaya was considered as a petrified princess, as a playful child by the cabinet of ministers. Her childish behaviour only helped her a lot to fool the ministers and using her wit she manages to turn the game against the ones who had planned it against Vijaya. "When the political crisis goes beyond the control of ministers, Vijaya resolute to go before the crowd. She surpasses the voice of ministers and with her practical wit she wins the confidence of public...she takes the benefit of the situation and with her wit she gets success in turning the tide of public opinion in her own favour. She exhibits her ability to manipulate the psychology of mob better than her ministers." (Agarwal Beena, 138). In the play Silence! The Court Is In Session, Miss Benare very frankly accepts her sin that she fell in love with her mother's brother. "It's true. I did commit a sin"(117). There is no story without wounds. Every scar tells a story that thought wounded many times still she managed to survive. In the words of Berne Brown, "Owing our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we will ever do." (Berne Brown). A woman can be the strongest just by being herself. This fact proved to be true and apt in case of Vijaya and Miss Benare.

A woman is weak only till the time she shed tears, once she decides to take the power in her own hands, no one can stop her and that is the time when it's the turn for those to shed tears who made her cry. According to Mary Anne Radmacher, "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying "I will try again tomorrow"". Same thought gets highlighted in

Sarita's words in the play Kamala, when she openly expresses her will not to come along with her husband Jaisingh into the party.

JASINGH: You don't want to come? Why?

SARITA: That is my will.

JASINGH: (Rather surprised) Your will ?

SARITA: Aren't I allowed to have a will of my own? (44)

Here we can see clearly the feeling of agitation in Sarita while she is denying her husband to come along with him in the party. Sarita undergoes a huge change and now has realised the value of self-importance and is converted into an assertive lady who finally discovers her true identity. Marge Piercy rightly comments, "A strong woman is a woman determined to do something others are determined not to do." (Marge Piercy). We can further find a spark of agitation in Sarita's words in the play when she is wounded mentally and emotionally after living a life of subjugation under her husband's will and has now revolted against her husband. Sarita here establishes herself a true example of strong woman according to a famous quote of Carly Simon, which says, "A really strong woman accepts the war she went through and is enabled by her scars."(Simon Carly)

SARITA : I am going to present a man who is in the year 1982 still keeps a slave, right here in Delhi. Jaisingh Jadhav . I am going to say this man's a great advocate of freedom. And he brings home a slave and exploits her. He doesn't consider a slave a human being- just a useful object. One you can use and throw away. He gets people to call him a sworn enemy of tyranny. But he tyrannizes his own slave as much as he likes, and doesn't think anything of it- nothing at all. Listen to the story of how he bought the slave Kamala and made use of her. The other slave he got free – not just free – the slave's father shelled out the money – a big sum. Ask him what he did with it.[An uncontrollable sob bursts from her. She controls it.] (46)

A woman when realises her self-worth she manages to do those things which none other can even think of doing. She becomes strong and a

feeling of self-respect grows inside her where she starts taking the decisions of her life on her own according to her will. Such a woman is a threat to the patriarchal male dominated society and thus she is misconstrued as something bad and ugly. Kelis clearly comments about the aforesaid fact. "Being the ideal of a strong woman means utilizing all the things that God gives you. People are always saying to me, "You're a strong female, so why are you wearing a bikini on the cover of that magazine?" Being a strong woman is misconstrued to be something ugly and bad." (Kelis). In the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*, the aforesaid quote proves to be apt and truly shows the double standards of male dominated custom bound society. The freedom of Miss Benare was considered as a bad and ugly side of her character. Vinyl Wall Decals rightly comments, "A successful woman is one who can build a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at her." All the female characters in Tendulkar's plays proved themselves as a perfect example of a strong self-esteeming woman. All of the feminine characters like Sarita, Miss Benare and Vijaya faced ample of problems and obstructions in their path of self-assertion but in the end through their power of endurance and strong will power to obtain self-dignity, all of them came out with flying colours giving a tight slap on the face of patriarchal male dominated chauvinistic self-centred biased masculine world.

CONCLUSION

A woman in this chauvinistic society is like a bird who is caged since ages, who is fully aware of her importance and power still she bears all odds silently, faces all wounds quietly but once the limit is crossed and when an attack is made on her self-respect, she breaks all the chains and with her strong will power and decision she wipes away her tears and uses her strength and power to show to the world that she will not stay quite and will fight back for her rights. Stephen R. Covey aptly comments about a self-made strong woman, "I am not the product of my circumstances. I am the product of my decisions". (Stephen R. Covey). All of the feminine characters proved Stephen Covey's quote to be strongly apt and true.

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