



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 8.4
IJAR 2023; 9(8): 253-256
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 10-05-2023
Accepted: 13-06-2023

Dr. Madhulika Das
Assistant Professor of English,
Department of Applied
Sciences & Humanities
Ajay Kumar Garg Engineering
College, Ghaziabad, Uttar
Pradesh, India

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Madhulika Das
Assistant Professor of English,
Department of Applied
Sciences & Humanities
Ajay Kumar Garg Engineering
College, Ghaziabad, Uttar
Pradesh, India

Women as Created by Patriarchy: A study of women's psyche in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session and Sakharam Binder*

Dr. Madhulika Das

Abstract

This paper deals with the opposite facets of women developed in a patriarchal Indian society. It is obvious from the plays of Vijay Tendulkar that women are either suppressive or indomitable as per their nature or the circumstances they had undergone. In his plays, Tendulkar has given the real picture of women: weak, submissive, and victimized or a Shavian New Woman who is strong enough to combat the male chauvinism. In a portrayal of these women, one more sect of women is found whose mind-sets are shaped by the patriarchal society. The women who are earlier projected as meek and docile have lately acquired the courage enough to manipulate the situation in their own favour to retain their position in the male-oriented society. They portray a dynamic change in their character which leaves the spectators spellbound in the end of the play. Hence, this paper attempts to bring out the opposite facets of a woman and how patriarchy plays a huge role in shaping a woman's mind-set according to male psyche. Such woman is so internalized in patriarchy that unknowingly she becomes a foil to another woman.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Shavian new woman, foil, vulnerability, internalization, hypocrisy

Introduction

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar, born on 6th January 1928 in Mumbai, Maharashtra, was one of the leading Indian playwrights of post-modern India. He delineated contemporary society and its weal with utmost clarity. He gave meticulous representation of evils taking place in society, as he witnessed during his lifetime. His plays dealt with the variety of themes like violence, revenge, caste discrimination, human trafficking, domestic brutality, sexual immorality, male dominance, social taboos prevailing in present times. He reflects the dark and gloomy picture of society where human beings are ingrained with cruelty, moral degradation, vices and growing ambitions of power and supremacy. In almost all his plays, women emerged as the worst sufferers entangled with the superficial moral standards of hypocritical society.

Women are prejudiced as the 'weaker sex' and the 'other self' since the early days of man's existence. They must go through many trials and tribulations to survive in the male biased society. They are devoid of equal rights with men due to certain characteristic features. In patriarchal society, the women are always identified as "other" and man as "self". Men and women are assigned with certain roles which are universally accepted. If man is rational and active, the woman is rather considered emotional and passive. Man is always treated superior to woman. According to Dr. Vijay Kumar Sinha:

Man is seen as the norm, woman as the 'other' not merely different but also inferior, lacking. Personality traits are distinguished in terms of polar opposites of masculine and feminine. Men are considered to be bold, strong, assertive, independent, aspiring, rational, and logical; women, on the contrary, are considered to be timid, yielding, gentle, dependent, self-sacrificing, emotional, intuitive. (Prasad and Barbudhe 169).

Patriarchy works assigning certain roles and tries to privilege one over the other. The system of patriarchy upholds that everything should be looked at from the male point of view. Thus, men are subject to rule and extend their power over the subordinate sex.

This led to the denigration of women's rights and position in the society. In every sphere of life whether family, religion, art, political, social or legal system, women are subdued in all domains. In such state women are unaware or unconscious of the fact of their subordination rather they internalise themselves and help the male-dominated society in this affair. They are regarded as objects, property or money and they usually accept their subjection.

Simone De Beauvoir in his famous work "The Second Sex" opines that women to realize and accept their subdued position to man due to the notion that "the world is masculine on the whole, those who fashioned it, ruled it and still dominate it are men." (Beauvoir 298) It is society that distinguishes women from men. That's why, she says, 'One is not born but becomes a woman'.

Vijay Tendulkar, fundamentally a Marathi playwright deals with women's exploitation and vulnerability in his major plays. He is the writer known for his keen observation and dealing with the complexities of human characters. In some of his significant plays, Tendulkar presents women in different lights. Though, the women projected are different in their behavioural traits, ways and character but they have one thing in common and that is their suppression in one way or the other. However, it is interesting to note that he never portrays woman merely as a vanquished victim. His plays divulge the message that woman, too, possesses the strength, the courage, and the puissance for facing and surviving the onslaughts of institutionalized power.

While dealing with the theme of women's subjugation, Tendulkar delineates both phases of women in his plays. As Prof. Anita Myles has pointed out, he projected woman as the subaltern and woman as the 'Shavian New Woman'.

The Shavian concept projects the contemporary woman as liberated because she does not succumb to the male chauvinism, though at the same time she fulfils her respective role of womanhood competently and sincerely. The subaltern woman prefers to succumb to the traditional Indian concept of always being a second-grade citizen in the patriarchal social set up and quietly assents to her suppression and exploitation. (Myles, Preface p. svii).

The paper attempts to have a comparative study of the women characters in Tendulkar's famous plays: *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Sakharam Binder*. It is observed that in major plays of Tendulkar women are presented in pairs. The one could be seen as Subaltern while the other as the Shavian New woman. The suppressed one plays the vital role to subjugate the other. Thus, one becomes the foil to another and actively participates in as well as promotes the patriarchy.

The play *Silence! The Court is in Session* is all about male domination. The protagonist Miss Leela Benare is put on a trial, disguised as a mock trial in which she was brutally harassed on the accusation of infanticide. All the other characters devised against Miss Benare and she stands all alone for her defence. The play gradually reveals the reality of Benare's pregnancy while she is unmarried. The other members got a chance to torture her for the illegal act and sentenced her to undertake an abortion. The play ends with a heartbroken monologue of Miss Benare, who bluntly refuses the so-called norms of the society determining to lead her life on her own terms and conditions.

As a close study of *Silence! The Court is in Session*, apart from the central character Leela Benare; Mrs. Kashikar has

also played a huge role in the game of mock trial. On one hand, Miss Benare is young, mild, and full of life, unconventional and a working woman. She is a school-teacher who works with dedication. She likes to live her life freely on her own terms without intervention. She is an innocent lady who is duped by the coveted males twice and ruthlessly left at her fate. 'Benare falls victim to the false male ego of superiority.' (Prasad 174).

Mrs. Kashikar, on the other hand, is completely different from Miss Benare. She is a married, middle-aged, childless and a conventional woman who disapproves the free life of a woman as Miss Benare is leading. In the beginning of the play Miss Benare introduced her as 'Mrs Hand that rocks the cradle.' She is a traditional woman who is married and want to have children. She is completely controlled by her husband Mr. Kashikar. As opposed to Benare, she has much concern on society and its norms. In words of Dr. Shanta Gokhale.

She, as much as the men, is keen to draw blood when Benare is put on trial. She has an obvious problem with Benare. She is the single free woman, the working woman, the one who is vying for equality with men in their own world. Her very existence places the question mark against the emptiness of Mrs. Kashikar's life. That is why she offers her help with such alacrity when the men shy away from physically forcing Benare into the dock. They are all middle-class men who must not be seen to harass a woman. Tearing her apart emotionally is perfectly permissible. (Madge 33).

It candidly exhibits women's frailty in patriarchal society. As a woman, Miss Benare is not allowed to express her views and opinion rather she is put silenced on every occasion in the mock trial. Benare falls prey of masculinity. With reference to Mrs. Kashikar character, Babasaheb Kangune in his paper: Study of Female Psyche in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Sakharam Binder* says.

Miss Benare was silenced by everybody. Benare remains helpless and pathetic woman surrounded by masculine force. In addition to that, another woman, Mrs Kashikar, instead of giving support to Miss Benare, she criticizes modern educated women like Miss Benare.....It shows the biased and prejudiced viewpoints of people in society in general against women. It proves again, how one woman becomes an enemy to other. The best example is charges imposed by Mrs. Kashikar against Ms. Benare. It is unfortunate one that Mrs. Kashikar was enjoying the humiliation of another woman i.e. Miss Benare. (Kangune).

In this game of male chauvinism, Mrs. Kashikar has never realized her own subjugation and maltreatment by her husband. The following conversation shows how unknowingly Mrs. Kashikar is suppressed on expressing her desire to play the role of accused in the mock trial. The exchange took place in the following manner.

Mrs. Kashikar: Shall I do it? I will if you like.

Kashikar: No! [Mrs. Kashikar falls silent.] She can't get among a few people without wanting to show off! Shows off all the time!

Mrs. Kashikar: [Quite put out]. Enough I won't do it! Satisfied? [She is thoroughly disheartened]

Sukhatme: We don't need to take any of you. Kashikar, let's have a really different kind of accused. Eh? Let's have our Miss Benare! Eh, Ponshe? What d' you think of my choice?

Ponshe: It's good.

Sukhatme: Then where's the need for argument? Well, Mrs. Kashikar?

Mrs Kashikar: If you say so, it's all right. In any case, we'll be able to see what the trial of a woman is like. [Out of sheer habit, to Mr. Kashikar] Isn't that so, dear? One should have that experience.

Kashikar: [sarcastically]. Of course! I suppose they're just about to make you a judge of Supreme Court!

Mrs. Kashikar: That's not how I meant it...

Sukhatme: There's not much difference between one trial and another. But when there's a woman in the dock, the case does have a different complexion, that's true. That is my experience. (Collected Plays 72-73).

Though, Mrs. Kashikar doesn't take such suppression lightly and mutters angrily on being humiliated by her husband, on several occasions, yet she remains quiet and silent accepting the male dominance. Moreover, she equally participated in the patriarchal system by expressing her wish, like the other male participants, to trap Miss Benare in the game of mock trial. She looks at Miss Benare and her behaviour with contempt. In this way, she let down her own kind to establish herself on the right side of man-made social codes.

Thus, we see Mrs. Kashikar exemplifies the subaltern who succumbs to her subordination whereas Miss Benare stands against her suppression like a 'Shavian New Woman' despite excessive verbal harassment. She gathers the courage enough to give a long speech at the close of the play which expresses her pent-up emotions and desire to live an independent life. Better to mention an extract from her monologue.

I cried inside, and I made them laugh. I was cracking up with despair, and I taught them hope. For what sin are they robbing me of my job, my only comfort? My private life is my own business. I'll decide what to do with myself; everyone should be able to! That can't be anyone else's business. (Collected Plays 117).

In the entire play Mrs. Kashikar supported patriarchy being cruel to her own kind without realizing the truth of her own vulnerability. She equally participates in victimizing Benare, as she internalizes herself to patriarchy. Since, she has been living in suppression for several years, she falls into the agreement of male domination for which she did not make least effort to overcome. The society has changed her mind in such a way that she becomes a foil to another woman.

Lakshmi and Champa in *Sakharam Binder* are another pair of women who share a common condition underneath their contrasting characters. The play tells the story of the book binder Sakharam who gives shelter to the destitute women but exploits these women by getting them to perform household chores along with sexual favours. Both women are abandoned wives and deprived of a happy married life. Lakshmi has been abandoned by her husband because of no issue while Champa has abandoned hers due to excessive physical torture. Lakshmi is meek, docile, submissive, hard-working and willing to fulfil her patron's cruel demands even in bed. While Champa is straightforward, bold, indomitable and rebel against her oppression. She shows no

respect to her male counterparts and unwilling to be subservient against male dominance.

However, she must submit to Sakharam ultimately, though with the intake of excessive liquor so that she would remain unaware of what is done to and with her body. Her first response to Sakharam's sexual demand is, "I'm not that sort of woman. Now you just behave yourself. Don't go around like a dog behind a bitch", and later, "I'm not too nice when I'm upset. Don't upset me. I don't like that sort of thing.....all that man-woman stuff". (Collected Plays) But soon she submits to Sakharam by fulfilling all his demands. Though, Lakshmi and Champa are different in their behaviour, yet they have passed through same physical torture and humiliations not only by their better-halves, but also their patron Sakharam. Lakshmi has been thrown out because she has not borne her husband a child. The fault could be her husband's, but she alone is held responsible for the fault according to the social system. She is thrown away by Sakharam too for the same reason even though she pampers him like a wife as well as bears his merciless beating and kicking. Consequently, in order to survive as well as safeguard her identity, "Lakshmi has internalized the patriarchal value system and cannot cope with the situation which threatens the natural establishment" (Sharma).

Champa on the other hand accepts Sakharam merely as 'her man' as she has no alternative to go to. Unlike Lakshmi, she rebels against her victimization and does not accept conventional norms and values of the so-called patriarchal society. She looks bold and strong outwardly, but she is naive, tender-hearted, and innocent from within. It is obvious, when Lakshmi comes back to Sakharam, Champa persuades him to give her shelter. Nevertheless, Lakshmi develops enmity against Champa that triggers malicious desire into her. The presence of both these ladies in the same house led Sakharam mentally crippled. He undergoes psychological turmoil and grows impotent. As a result.

Lakshmi develops an asexual relationship with Fauzdar Shinde while Champa develops a sexual association with Daud, since Sakharam can no longer sexually satisfy her. Though Lakshmi finds nothing wrong with her association with Shinde, her moral sense is outraged by Champa's affair with Daud, and she uses this opportunity to malign her rival. This brings out the latent hatred in Lakshmi for Champa. (Bannerjee 15).

Champa commands more sympathy as she is the one who has suffered most on account of her voluptuous body while the men have sought selfish pleasures from it. We fully sympathise with her after hearing about her earlier life with her husband. When Sakharam asks why she ill-treats her husband and whether she has a heart or not, then she replies in the following way:

I don't have a heart. He chewed it up raw long ago. He brought me from my mother even before I'd become a woman. He married me when I didn't even know what marriage meant. He'd tortured me at night. He branded me, and stuck needles into me and made me do awful, filthy things. I ran away. He brought me back and stuffed chilly powder into that god-awful place, where it hurts most. That bloody pimp! What's left of my heart now? He tore lumps out of it, he did. He drank my blood. (Collected Plays 167).

The arrival of Champa changes Lakshmi and made her realise her individual identity. Lakshmi who is formerly portrayed as humble, gentle, submissive, and religious has consequently become bold enough to cause Champa's death in order to hold her position strong in the life of her patron. Thus, Lakshmi depicts an ironical character that was pious, patient, and tender-hearted but later turned into a vicious plotter igniting jealousy in Sakharam for Champa. To quote Dr. Shailaja B. Wadikar:

Appearance is totally deceptive so far as Lakshmi's character is concerned. There is a definite development in her character from a simple, generous, sensitive woman in to a cunning, ruthless, determined lady who devises a plan for defeating her rival and carries out her decision successfully. Looking upon Champa as her rival in love, she incites Sakharam to kill her and helps in covering up the murder. The vicious treatment she metes out to Champa creates a feeling of antipathy towards her in the audience's minds (Wadikar).

Champa meets her tragic end and ironically Lakshmi becomes foil for her doom. 'Her disclosure to Sakharam of Champa's clandestine relationship with Dawood enrages Sakharam.' Out of sheer disappointment, he chokes Champa to death. A critical analysis of both the women characters shows that Champa who is strong and bold enough to assert her individuality and rebel against established norms met her tragic death by none another than a woman who seems to be too gentle and mild to cause even a death of a tiny creature. In words of Poonam Matkar and Vikas Jaoolkar.

The character of Lakshmi presents an image of the hypocritical society. What we preach is not followed by what we practice and the difference is what causes imbalance and frustration in our lives....The suppressed desires of a young woman – the physical needs, the authority over a household, and the power over a man – are surfaced in the form of a conspiracy. She picks on the weakness that a man cannot tolerate his woman going out with another man irrespective of any other fact. (Matkar and Jaoolkar).

Lakshmi who was seen vulnerable right from the onset of the play has surprisingly become the victimizer causing the death of Champa. There is a sea change in her character from victim to the victimizer. The woman who could not hurt even a small insect has diabolically backstabbed another woman just to ensure her place in her patron's life whom she considers her husband. In the end of the play, Champa is seen as the vanquished victim who was not only dominated but killed by a woman of her own kind.

To quote Shanta Gokhale

It is not through Lakshmi but through Champa that Tendulkar shows how deep-rooted women's exploitation in society is. For here is a woman who is unconventional and strong enough to have left her husband. Here is a woman who can nonplus Sakharam by not behaving like a destitute dependent. Here is a woman who will not like a man use her body simply because he is her husband or her patron. If Lakshmi draws her strength from being unconventional, Champa draws it from being an independent, self-respecting individual. (Madge 38).

This paper is a comparative study of the women characters in the two major plays of Vijay Tendulkar. In our social set-up which is male biased one cannot deny the fact that a suppressed woman acts dominantly to subjugate the other. Women internalise themselves in patriarchy and directly or indirectly help men to exploit other women being unaware of their own exploitation. In this way, the one becomes foil to another.

Thus, patriarchy creates woman helpless and narrows her mind to be confined to the man-made social rules. It becomes so deep-rooted into the psyche of some women that they lose feminine identity and unknowingly start posing the masculine attitude towards another women. We can see that Miss Benare and Champa act as the 'Shavian New Woman' who protest the domineering patriarchal society living an independent life. Contrary to them, Mrs. Kashikar and Lakshmi are the subalterns who succumb to the male chauvinism without showing any sort of resistance to their plight. They are rendered cripple-minded in the society ruled by men. Hence, they make their own kind let down to uphold their position according to the man-made codes. Lakshmi and Champa as well as Mrs. Kashikar and Leela Benare thus, represent the two polarities of feminine response to patriarchy. Women like Lakshmi and Mrs. Kashikar tend to be more dangerous than their male-counterparts as they become the powerful tool to promote patriarchy in society. They turn from victim to victimizer by strongly supporting patriarchy. As a result, their situation remains unchanged to which they accept happily or unhappily.

References

1. Note: The plays and their quotations have been taken from *Collected Plays in Translation* ed. by S. Bandyopadhyay, New Delhi: OUP; c2003.
2. Bannerjee, Arundhati. Introduction. *Five Plays of Vijay Tendulkar*, Bombay: OUP; c1992. p. 15.
3. Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*, tr. H.M. Parshley, London: Four square Book; c1949. p. 298.
4. Kangune, Babasaheb Ramdas. Study of Female Psyche in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session and Sakharam Binder*. *Our Heritage*. 2020;68:30. <https://www.researchgate.net>
5. Madge VM. (Edition.). *Vijay Tendulkar's Plays: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, New Delhi: Pencraft International; c2009. p. 33.
6. Matkar, Poonam, Jaoolkar, Vikas. Psychological Representation of Female Characters in Vijay Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder*. *Research Articles*. Published in 2018;4:37. <http://www.ashvsmegh.net>
7. Myles Anita. "Preface". *Contemporary Indian English Drama: An Overview*, New Delhi: Sarup Book; c2010.
8. Op. cit., *The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar*; p. 174
9. Op. cit., *An Anthology of Recent Criticism*; p. 38
10. Prasad, Amar Nath, Barbuddhe, Satish (Editions.). *The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar: Critical Explorations*, New Delhi: Sarup & Sons; c2008. p. 169.
11. Sharma, Pritika. Portrayal of Female Characters in a Patriarchal Set-up. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Technology*. 2022;8:11. <http://ijirt.org>
12. Wadikar, Shailaja B. *Sakharam Binder: Tendulkar's Human Zoo*. *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*. 2011;2:1. <https://www.the-criterion.com>