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WOMEN AS VICTIMS: A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE IN SELECT PLAYS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR

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Human Rights of Women are considered as International armour for women because they protect them from all types of exploitation, subjugation, fear and violence. Human Rights are very important to women, particularly those belonging to the higher middle, middle, and marginalized classes. As there is no life without breathe, there is no dignity of living for such women without Human Rights. All human beings of both the genders belonging to all classes should live, enjoy life and its all avenues of advancement. While enjoying, they should not experience any kind of obstacles or restrictions or hindrances. It is only Human Rights that provide them with rights to enjoy their freedom of thought, expression and deeds. Hence, they are essential and they are universal in their application. They bestowed every woman with the life of equality in her happy co-existence regardless of her caste, colour, religion, race, etc.

All the countries of the world have made every effort to implement the Human Rights through their well established Constitutions. All their Constitutions have been framed on the basis of the provisions given in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Optional Protocols. Like the Constitutions of all other countries, Indian Constitution also guarantees these rights to all Indian citizens. Such rights have been incorporated under the chapter "Fundamental Rights (Part III) and the Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV)." The rights guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution are enforceable in a Court of Law. But the contents of the Directive Principles of State Policy are mere wishes, because such wishes cannot be enforced in a Court of

Law. Regarding the Directive Principles of State Policy, it is said:

Part IV mainly concerns with the poor, unemployed and destitute people. It is the duty of the State to apply the principles, contained in Part IV to make as Laws. Part IV provides that the State Policy aim at securing the rights of the citizens. It also provides for health and strength of workers, to safeguard men, women and children from abuse and exploitation. (qtd.in Paramasivam 185-186)

But all women are not aware of the existence of such rights. Violations of Human Rights meant for women occur in the name of religion, race, creed, caste, sex, language, and region both directly and indirectly. Unless and otherwise, such violations are brought to the notice of the concerned forum, and the Governments act accordingly, the exploited women have to meet with all types of hardships in their lives.

U.N. General Assembly Report, 1974 has changed the term 'Women's Rights as the 'Human Rights of Women.' The main purpose behind this change of term is only to emphasize the universality and indivisibility of Human Rights and their full and equal application to women as human beings without showing any partiality. Kay Granger has said that Human rights are meant for all women and not for the women belonging to the elite groups among them:

Human Rights are not a privilege granted for a few select groups among human beings. They are a liberty entitled to all and sundry, irrespective of race, religion, ethnicity and language, and Human Rights, by definition, include the rights of all humans, those in the dawn of life, the dusk of life, or the shadows of life" (Granger).

The Human Rights violations take place not only in the life of the women of inferiority class but also in the life of those belonging to higher strata of society. The more the human rights of women are violated, the more the women suffer from exploitation and subjugation. Men enjoy all rights but they deny women to enjoy their rights because the home, society, caste, and religion are the male dominated ones.

Women face a number of problems in all fields of their endeavours and at all levels of their life. Such feminine problems are the female infanticide, child marriage, dowry related cases, sexual harassment, raping, bonded labour, poverty, illiteracy, ill-treatment, slavery, predicament of abandoned women, the exploitation of such helpless women, sub-ordination at home and outside, torture, murder and all other things related to their activities. Every woman should be peaceful at heart and if her heart is peaceful, the whole world will turn to be peaceful. Hence, woman at home should not be taken for granted and subjugated. If a man drives away peace from the heart of his woman through exploitation, oppression and suppression, he deprives the home and the world of their peace. This is what Lao-tsc, the Chinese Philosopher of 6th Century BC has said:

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.
If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart [of women].
(qtd.in Montley 27)

Hence, every woman should be treated with equality, respect, love, cordiality, happiness and understanding. Her exploitation at home will lead to the chaotic environment in the society, nation and the world.

Vijay Tendulkar has been quite conscious of his social awareness of these violations on women. He has not suggested any remedial measures for such social

evils affecting the welfare of women. He has just focused his attention on them through his portrayal of women characters in his plays and highlighted their unfair treatment at home and in the society. He has depicted how women are violated, exploited and subjugated by men. In the treatment of women, men and society do not have any respect for the human rights of women. The law and constitutional provisions for protecting the women also fail to render remedial measures at the time of need. As far as women are concerned, their Human Rights are ineffective and meaningless. As exploitation goes unnoticed, women remain as voiceless beings. Selected plays of Vijay Tendulkar reflect the realities of how women and their rights have been taken for granted in civilized societies.

His feelings about the treatment of women in the society and at home by men have found their best expressions in his portrayal of women characters such as Miss. Leela Benare, Mrs. Kashikar, Kamala, Sarita.

Vijay Tendulkar is not a feminist but a realist to the core and his plays have become his voice to what he has seen happening to women and the incidents that have affected him greatly. His plays, selected for study, deal with the status of women in the male dominated society and men's hypocrisy. They depict men's lust, violence, exploitation and subjugation of women. Married women, those who are abandoned, voiceless and longing for livelihood have been shown as sexually exploited ones. They also expose men's indifference to women's Human Rights and their daredevil attitudes in the violation of such rights shown in their behaviour. These men are neither publically accused of being the merciless exploiters nor punished for violation of human rights. All women do not bring their subjugation and sexual torture to the public. Only a handful of women living in metros bring to the notice of the public and the law makers.

Silence! The Court is in Session is a direct attack on hypocritical attitudes of men regarding their glorification of motherhood and their use of women for sexual gratification. Such men, after sexually exploited the women, never hesitate to throw them away just for the sake of their professional and societal name. Miss.

Benare, a teacher by profession and a single woman of Independence and individuality, has had her sexual experience at the age of fourteen. This experience has made her become individually independent to decide her course of life. She has established her love relationship with Prof. Damle, a married man. It is her weakness that has forced her to prefer a married man to an unmarried one for her relationship, have sex with him and become pregnant. Benare knows that she has to go on living with her pregnant status finding a life partner not only for her but also a father to the unborn child of Prof. Damle. She has not committed any infanticide but under that pretext, her co artists accuse her of it not in public but among themselves in the rehearsal.

All men appear to be preaching the importance of the blessedness of motherhood when they find fault with Benare, her illicit relationship with married man Prof. Damle and her pregnancy. But they all stand to lose their identity as the saviours of morality of the society because they all want Benare to abort the unborn child. Mrs. Kashikar should have understood Benare who is in the process of attaining motherhood but she does not. She might have felt otherwise for her being barren and she should have kept quiet what will happen to Benare if she gives birth to a child even without marriage. It is her helplessness that makes her stand there, giving her observations about the moral conduct of women. A. Beena Mahida in her work titled "A Critical Analysis of Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session*" has rightly observed the attitudes towards Benare:

Mr. Kashikar's relation with Mrs. Kashikar brings out the humiliation of the typical Hindu Brahmin wife in the idolized family. The play satirizes the respectable façade of middle class men like Kashikar, Sukhatme, Ponshe, and Karnik. It also satirizes the human value these men profess. They preach the sanctity of motherhood but show absolutely no compunctions in asking Benare to destroy the foetus in her womb. Thus it ruthlessly exposes the lust latent in the minds of these gentlemen. (86)

The world of men is not fit for women but without women, their world is bereft of any humanizing elements. However, there exists a hostile environment in the world that does not allow women to live in peace and happiness. The world of men in *Silence! The Court is in Session* is an antagonistic one to a woman. This is the message of Tendulkar for which Anil Singhal has given his voice in his article "The Handling of Male Characters in Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session*:"

Tendulkar's play *Silence! The Court is in Session* projects a world as an essentially hostile place [for a woman] because it is populated only with men [Mr. Kashikar, Prof. Damle et. al.]. They are hypocrites, egoists, absolutists and hard-hearted realists. All of them have the same tastes, manners and attitudes as their inherent traits. (1)

None could expect a happy and cordial survival of a woman in the midst of such fault finding and hypocritical men and Benare is a victim of their exploitation and subjugation without anyone to come to her help in her predicament. Men are like elusive eel, escaping from finding a solution to her problem. They simply point out their fault finding finger at her as if there were righteous in their conduct.

Kamala is a play about the loss of human values in men such as sympathy, consideration and helpfulness. Men simply enjoy seeing socially poor women like Kamala being treated as things to be auctioned, sold and bought for the use of sex. The sale of such girls is going on with the agreement of their parents because the parents need money to tide over their financial problems for their livelihood. The poor women belonging to lower strata of society and marginalized class such as the Dalit and tribal women give themselves for sale so that they can lead some kind of protected life. Human rights and laws are there to prevent women being sold and bought. But they remain ineffective because of the money-minded law enforcing officers. They look nonchalant as if it were a part of life. It is these people who are to prevent this from happening are indirectly helpful to the people involving in sale of girls for sex and prostitution.

However, Kamala in flesh trade market is bought by Jaisingh Jadhav not for enjoying sex with her but to expose the illegal flesh trade, the exposure of which can bring him fame and name. Soon after his exposure of flesh market through Kamala, he leaves her in a home meant for such women. This is the one aspect which makes him stand apart from all other buyers of women as their slaves for sex. Instead of expected promotion, his exposure sees the end of his journalistic career. This happening is to prove that the exploiter will not go on thriving in his life by exploiting the woman for being poor, ignorant and innocent forever and he has to meet his providential end to his ambition. Human Rights and the law have become blind to the situation of Kamala but the Almighty has given the punishment to Jaisingh Jadhav for his exploitation.

The exploitation of Sarita as a wife is quite different. She has been bought not by giving money but getting money from the seller as a dowry, that is her father, for permanent possession of her husband Jaisingh Jadhav. The life of the exploiter and the exploited as husband and wife respectively is a regular occurrence. It is not made known to the public until the woman concerned comes out with the exposure of her husband's oppression for more dowries in kinds and cash. Such incidents happen only in the families where the women have independence, equally educated and financially well sound. If women do not have any independence, though educated, such oppressive nature of her husband does not get exposed as shocking news for public consumption. They adjust themselves to the attitudes of their husbands. Some women, if educated and traditional, remain ignorant of the activities of their husbands as some kind of oppression. They treat such behaviour of their husbands as natural outcome of marital life and it is not something new.

Sarita, the wife of Jaisingh Jadhav, does not realize that her duties to her husband at odd hours in his absence amount to exploitation. She considers them as the wifely duties and she does everything without any complaint or protest. She is a lovely bonded wife not knowing her real identity. But for the arrival of Kamla to

her house, she would have remained a faithful wife without any knowledge of the hypocrisy of her husband. The man who fights for the depressed class and their emancipation fails to think of himself as an exploiter of his wife. Kamla's position is different from that of hers. Kamla knows her real identity that she is a slave cum sexual object of her buyer. She does not entertain any hatred for being exploited because of her volatile position in life.

Sarita's position as a wife of a journalist in life is real and permanent. She does not feel that she is exploited. When she does everything, as she likes for the sake of her husband, she does not consider herself exploited. Man becomes restless when his sexual appetite is not fed by his wife under some pretext or other. She should have spoken to him openly about their sexual relationship. Had she done, he would have understood her predicament and body condition. Being a faithful and traditional wife in catering to his needs, she should have understood her husband and acted accordingly. It is she who should have known her husband's feelings and aspirations. Had she asked about his day to day activities and shared her views with him, she would not have some other lady to come and make her realize her identity. Sonali Jain in her article "Kamala: Within and Beyond" has rightly said about the status of Sarita. "Kamla is a signifier of exploitation because she is the catalyst who brings Sarita, the educated, intelligent wife of Jaisingh Jadhav, to her existential crisis and precipitates the fall of Jaisingh Jadhav" (93)

The analysis of Tendulkar's plays also show the immediate need of changes in existing Constitutions to protect women and children from all types of exploitation. His plays bring to light the burning issues of the violations of the human rights of women. All women characters being exploited and subjugated dance to the tunes of male dominance. They live and love as per the wishes of their men as a result of which they suffer silently reconciling themselves to their oppression and suppression. Each man protagonist of the plays follows a new pattern of exploitation of women protagonists. All male characters in the play *Silence! The Court is in*

Session join together and expose the private and personal life of Benare and humiliate her in the form of conducting a rehearsal before staging the court proceedings finally.

Jaisingh Jadhav under the guise of investigating journalism exploits Kamala, the innocent and ignorant tribal woman, to his advantage but at the same time he keeps his wife Sarita acting as his wife cum slave in catering only his needs. He does not care about the personal interests of his wife.

All women that appear in these plays as exploited have shown no signs of protest or opposition against their exploitation and oppression. Benare though she denies all accusations cannot but be silent, and she thinks only of her situation in which she is placed. Kamala and Sarita accept their status in life and adjust themselves to their life of enslavement. Though Sarita appears to show her individuality to expose her husband's hypocrisy, she keeps quiet when she finds him in a greater predicament than hers. The researcher's

role is to create awareness among the human beings about human rights and its violations, then only the human rights violations can be uprooted from this society.

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