

Violence in Tendulkar's 'The Vultures' And 'Silence! The Court Is In Session'

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Introduction

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar Was Born On 6 January, 1928 In Girgaon, Mumbai, Maharashtra. He Began His Career As A Dramatist In The Mid 1950s. At The Age Of Eleven, He Wrote, Directed And Acted In His First Play. At Age Fourteen, He Participated In The 1942 Indian Freedom Movement. Tendulkar's Early Struggle For Survival And Living For Sometime In Tenements In Mumbai Provided Him First-Hand Experience About The Life Of Urban Lower Middle Class. He Thus Brought New Authenticity To Their Depiction In Marathi Theatre. 'The Vultures' Was Set In A Morally Collapsed Family Structure And Explored The Theme Of Violence. This Prolific Writer Has Twenty – Eight Full Length Plays To His Credit. Winner Of Several National And International Awards And Fellowships, He Is Both A Venerated And A Controversial Figure In The Country's Theatre Scene.

'The Vultures' Was Published In 1971. Conservative Section Of Maharashtrian Society Was Stunned By The Open Display Of Illicit Sexual Relations And Scenes Of Violence That Constituted The Plot. The Play Is A Ruthless Dissection Of Human Nature Revealing Its Inherent Tendencies To Violence, Avarice, Selfishness, Sensuality And Sheer Wickedness. The Decadence And Degeneration Of Human Individuals Belonging To A Middle Class Family Is Exposed Through The Interactions Among The Members Of The Family. The Play Has Two Acts. There Is A Gruesome Portrayal Of Man's Greed And On The Other; There Is A Portrayal Of Tender Love.

Tendulkar In The Play 'The Vultures' Displays A Rare Genius For Mixing The Absurd – As Evident In The Cruel And Curious Relationship Obtaining In The Relationship Among Pappa The Father, His Two Sons Ramakant And Umakant, And Manik, His Daughter, And The Tender But Possessive Relationship Between Rama, Ramakant's Wife And Rajaninath, Pappa's Illegitimate Son. Tendulkar Admits To The Fact That The Play Is Characterized By Violence. It Is From Rajaninath's Songs That We Come To Know Of The Past And Present Of The Pitalefamily. In The Opening Scene, He Sings That Twenty – Two Years Ago Ramakant And Rama Left The House Locking It. He Remembers The Day Ramakant Married Rama. Then She Was Innocent. Ramakant Being An Addict To Liquor, Failed In His Duty As A Husband To Make A Mother Of His Wife. Rama Had To Fulfill Her Only Desire Through Her Brother- In – Law, Rajaninath.

It Is Liquor That Makes The Characters Be Violent And Harsh Towards One Another. Pappa Is Hardened By His Own Past Crimes. When Ramakant And Umakant Talk To Their Own Sister About Her Affair With The Raja Of Hondur. They Use Bad Language Which Reveals Their Incestuous Nature. The Arrival Of Sakharam Rouses The Suspicion That Their Father Still Has Some Money. They Drive Away Sakharam. Then, Ramakant, Umakant And Manik Make Their Pappa Drink To Know The Truth About The Money. This Scene Is Filled With Violence. The Sons Pretend To Fight Each Other With The Father Getting Trapped Between Them. Pappa Gets Injured. To Escape From Further Assault, Pappa Admits To Them That He Has Deposited Some Money. His Refusal To Part With The Money Enrages His Children. The Children Try To Kill Him. Pappa Runs Away. Ramakant And Umakant Want To Get Rid Of Their Sister. At A Game Of Cards, Umakant Is About To Choke Manik To Death. Immediately Ramakant Says:

“Don't Bloody Let Her Go.”

The Words Of Ramakant Reveals The Inherent Violence In Him. Ramakant And Umakant Discuss Manik's Love Affair With The Raja Of Hondur. They Plot To Break Manik's Leg Inorder To Prevent Her From Meeting Her Lover Further. The Two Brothers Ruthlessly Execute This Plan. Meanwhile, They Learn That Raja Of Hondur Has Impregnated Manik. The Two Brothers Attempt To Blackmail Him But He Dies Of Heart Attack. The Two Brothers Kick Out The Foetus Growing In Manik's Womb. Knowing Of Rama's Pregnancy, Manik Attempts By Superstitious Spell To Get The Foetus Aborted. The Psychological Trauma The Characters Undergo In Pursuit Of Wealth Is Revealed In The Play.

Rama Is Given An Opportunity To Express Her Agony And Frustration. Rama Gives A Long Moving Speech With Regard To Her Survival In The House Of Vultures. She Is Disgusted With Her Husband's

Drunken Love-Making And She Declares To Rajaninath Her Intention Of Immolating Herself. Rajaninath Understands Rama's Yearning To Become A Mother. He Holds Her In An Embrace. Rama Pretends To Protest. Rama Becomes Pregnant. We Find Ramakanth Taking Care Of Her. He Thinks That The Seed That Grows In Her Womb Is His. But When He Comes To Know The Truth, He Takes Revenge By Killing Him.

Towards The End Of The Play, 'The Vultures', Ramakant Becomes A Pauper. He Starts Drinking Profusely. In The Mean Time, Hari Pitale, The Pappa And Manik Have Been Hanging Around The House. They Want To Take Revenge On Him. Pappa Persuades Rajaninath To Join Hands With Him To Take Revenge Upon His Legitimate Sons. Rajaninath Send Him Away. He Collides With Umakant Who Has Been Eavesdropping. Manic Comes To The Garage Announcing That She Has Succeeded In Aborting Rama. Ramakant In Drunken State Raves That He Will Abort Rama Since The Child Is Not His. Thus We Can Say That The Vultures Is The Most Violent Of Tendulkar's Plays. The Ferocity, Ruthlessness, Avarice And Cunningness Of The Vulture Is Inherent In All The Members Of Pappa's Family.

The Play 'Silence! The Court Is In Session' Was Written In 1963 For Rangayan, A Mumbai-Based Theater Group. It Was Inspired After The Playwright Overheard The Conversation Among The Members Of Amateur Theater Group Travelling On Mumbai Local Train To Perform A Mock Trial At Vile Parle. A Group Of Professors Has To Play At The Village. Leena Benare Was The First To Reach There. She Is An Independent, Jolly, Working, Single Woman Who Loves To Live A Liberal Life. All The People Has The Plan To Practice Before The Play But Then They Found That One Of A Member Is Absent. So, They Decide To Add A Local Resident Samant In The Play Who Is Not Familiar With Acting. They Decide To Set A Mock Trail To Make Samant Understood How To Act In A Drama. They Select Benare As Accused Of Infanticide And Having Illegitimate Affairs With Numerous Men Specially With The Absent Member Of Group Prof. Damle. The Play Which Starts With The Intention Of Fun Grew Serious When The Members Start Blaming Miss Benare For Her Way Of Living. There Is Drama In The Drama. The Playwright Has Powerfully Depicted The Male Chauvinism In The Society. At One Place Benare Is An Independent Woman On The Other Side There Is A Mrs. Kashikar Who Throughout The Drama Get Taunted By His Husband Mr. Kashikar. The Drama Depicts How The Society Treats A Woman Who Chooses To By Her Own.

In The Play 'Silence! The Court Is In Session', We Find Sexual And Psychological Violence Against A Woman. The Focal Point Of The Play Is The Violent Response Of The Male Dominated Society To Pre-Marital Relationship And Motherhood. The Mock-Trial Holds A Mirror To The Social Response To Such Things. What Is Wrong, Immoral For A Woman Is Not So For A Man. Benare, In The Beginning Of The Play Is Found Bubbling With Over Confidence. She Is A Little Naughty And Talkative. She Represents The Working Class Women Who Wants To Lead A Liberated Life. She Is A Victim Of Incest. She Is Robbed Of Her Virginity When She Is Hardly Fourteen Years Old. Benare Is An Object, A Commodity To Be Used And Thrown Away. Benare Is Disillusioned In Her Quest For A Stable Relationship. Having Realized The Sexual Urge Of The Body, She Calls It A Traitor. She Comes To A State Where She Despises It But She Wants To Retain It Only For A Child To Be Born.

In Act Three We See The Manifestation Of Physical Violence When Rokde Is Asked To Conduct The Accused To The Witness Box, And Mrs. Kashikar Virtually Drags Benare To The Witness Box. Benare, An Outspoken Women, Turns Immobile And Defiantly Silent. This Reversal Of Situation Shows What Odds A Progressive Women Has To Face. Mrs. Kashikar Represents The Orthodox, Tradition-Bound Married Woman. She Is The Submissive Wife Of Kashikar Who Treats Her As A Doormat, For He Is Always Snapping At Her And Snubbing Her. So, Mrs. Kashikar Cannot Stand The Idea Of Modern Young Women Earning Their Own Upkeep. Mrs. Kashikar Is Plainly Jealous Of Ms. Benare And The Freedom She Enjoys.

In This Play, Benare Loves Her Child As Dearly As Any Legitimate Mother Does. She Is Determined To Give Birth To The Baby. While The Society, Represented Here By The Court, Orders Her To Murder The Baby Before Birth. Ironically, The Court Itself Is Attempting To Do The Crime For Which She Is Prosecuted. Violence In 'Silence! The Court Is In Session' operates At Two Level – Verbal And Physical. Verbal Violence In Terms Of Humiliating Charges Against Benare And The Attempt To Project Her As The Unforgivable Villain Of The Society Has A Psychological Ramification For Both The Victim And The Victimizers. For The Violence Perpetuated By Kashikar And His Associates On Benare Can Be Traced To Collective Unconscious Of Men Born And Brought Up In A Patriarchal Society. Consequently, They Take A Dig Against Her By Out-Raging Her Modesty. Kashikar, The Judge, Goes To The Extent Of Prescribing The Old System Of Child Marriage. When He Says:

“What I Say Is, Our Society Should Revive The Old Custom Of Child Marriage. Marry Off The Girls Before Puberty. All This Promiscuity Will Come To A Full Stop.”

The Trial Goes To The Extent That Even Kashikar Feels That “...This Is Getting On Too Personal A Level.” Samant Starts Off With Noble Intentions In His Role As The Fourth Witness. He Tells Sukhatme “Of Course What Is True For The Trial Is Quite False Really.” The Disclosure That She Is Pregnant Without Being Married Ads To Her Discomfiture And She Cries Out “That's Enough.” Prof. Damle Is Responsible For All The

Discomfort She Is Experiencing. Kashikar's Report That She Would Be Dismissed By Tomorrow From The Job Shatters Her. She Is Half Dead And They Continue With Their Attack. Sukhatme's Words Leave Her Morally And Spiritually Wounded. In The Same Scene We Notice The Door Locked From Behind And Benare's Banging The Door To Go Away From The Court And The Process By Which She Is Forced To Remain Inside Amount To Physical Violence.

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