

**Structural Features and Stylistic Devices in
Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kamala***

S. Suma, M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D. Scholar (P.T)

**Department of English & Comparative Literature
Madurai Kamaraj University
Madurai-625 021**

=====
Abstract

This paper is an attempt to project the structure and stylistic devices projected in Vijay Tendulkar's selected plays, *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kamala* which provide the essence of reality prevailing in the society. Tendulkar uses the stylistic devices like 'dramatic' modeled on language, rhythms and association of ordinary speech, monologue, reversal of plot and 'mock trial', those devices give the play its unique dramatic significance and helps the playwright to give surprise and make suspense to the audience.

Keywords: Vijay Tendulkar, *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *Kamala*, structural features, reality, cruelty, dramatic technique, plot construction

Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kamala* are realistic plays in the sense, the middle-class characters figuring in them are obsessed with mundane issues who "find life rather dull and unhappy" (Abrams, 141). They are also "discussion plays" as the social issues discussed in them are not organically integrated into their plots; but "expounded in the dramatic give and take of a sustained debate among the characters." In both the plays, the 'setting' is the city and the 'atmosphere' is tense throughout, with only occasional patches of 'Crime relief'. The style that Tendulkar uses in both *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kamala* is 'demotic' modelled on "language, rhythms and association of ordinary speech" (Abrams, 166). *Silence! The Court is in Session* has three acts whereas *Kamala* is a two-act play, designed on the mode of the popular dramatic construct of the present century. There are no scene divisions of the acts. The plots are expertly structured so that in both the plays the denouncement unravels itself as 'reversal'.

It is imposed silence on Benare that gives the title *Silence!* - unique significance. Till the commencement of the 'mock-trial', Benare remains a picture of poise and vitality. She makes comments on the behaviour of her fellow-characters and sits singing and humming. Nevertheless, Silence descends on her when the 'mock-trial' begins with Kashikar's sudden interrogative statement:

"Prisoner Miss Benare, under section no:302 of
the Indian Panel Code you are accused of

the crime of infanticide. Are you guilty or not guilty of the aforementioned crime?”

Benare is dumb founded. Even the comic relief provided by the pan-spitting contest helps her regain her composure only for a brief while, as this short respite she gains, is not to last long. As the mock trial, is resumed, Benare increasingly seeks shelter in her self-imposed silence. Further all her attempts at protest are callously drowned in Kashikar the mock judge’s imposition: Silence! In such a helpless, hostile situation, Benare has no other choice but to remain silent, as no language can come to her rescue.

However, Benare breaks her self-imposed silence at last towards the close of the play, when she bursts forth into a long and brilliant monologue which brings out in most eloquent terms, her love of life, focusing with astonishing brilliance on her betrayal at the hands of Professor. Damle and the consequent torture at the hands of her fellow-characters. In fact, it is this monologue that has captured the imagination of audience of the Marathi Theatre. Tendulkar deliberately makes Benare break her silence through a stunning monologue which utterly exposes the hypocrisy of the urban middle-class chauvinists who have all ganged up against her out of sheer collective envy of her assertive confidence and uncompromising independence of spirit. The ‘mock-trial’ marks the daft stroke on the part of Tendulkar’s dramatic genius. It functions almost like ‘a play-within the play’ as the real performance is supposed to have been ‘Mock law Court’. It is the ‘mock-trial’ that causes the terminal ‘reversal’ in the play Benare, who has all along been baiting her male counterparts, ends up being the game ruthlessly hunted and baited by them all. This element of ‘reversal’ gives the play its unique dramatic significance. The ‘mock-trial’ also helps the playwright expose to his audience the cruelty that is latent in the collective psyche of the city-bred made chauvinists of Bombay. Benare is horror-stuck at the naked display of their innate cruelty towards her. The eagerness and enthusiasm with which the Kashikars, Rokde, Sukhatma, Ponshe and Karnik heap evidence after evidence against her terrify her and eventually, she sits frozen like a motionless status.

The dialogues in the play are characterized by a certain idiosyncratic use of syntax. Most of the utterances are short and there are abundant pauses, mocked by numerous dots and dashes. However, whenever serious topics are discussed the dialogue picks up a faster rhythm and the sentences a certain depth and fullness of the following quotes from the play, the first can be cited as an example of the ‘demotic style’ and the second, an example of the rounded dialogue. Rokde: So, then, soften, I said – ‘this is not proper. It is not proper! I don’t like this at all it doesn’t become you. That’s what I said: (Silence 102). The dialogue given above is so obviously ‘demotic’ for the readers or the audience knows that what Rokde says is a bear-faced lie. Tendulkar punctuates Benare’s monologue at the end of the play with a lot of paradoxical statements especially, when she talks of her love of life:

“Throw your life – away and you realize
the value of having it. Guard it dearer
than life and it only seems fit to

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:5 May 2019

S. Suma, M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D. Scholar (P.T)

Structural Features and Stylistic Devices in Vijay Tendulkar’s *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kamala*

through away” (Silence! 116).

In *Kamala*, a two-act play, we find almost all the structural features that we find in *Silence!* except “the play within the play” motif. It is a more compact play dealing with lesser number of characters and issues. There are in *Kamala*, brief but highly significant spells of silence, registering the sensitive trajectories of thought processes in the minds of the characters. Added to certain other structural features of *Silence!*. We have in *Kamala* the motif of hectic phone calls, which contribute to the principal theme of the play. Moreover, there is a deliberate manipulation of lights to indicate the passage of time, which we do not find in the former play.

The phone calls in *Kamala* are significant in that they indicate how busy well-known Jadav, the journalist, really is. It is when he is away that the phone rings so regularly that Kakashaheb asks Sarita: “Why don’t you make Kamalabai sit by the phone?” Some of the calls threaten Jadav with murder and one such call happens to be attended by Kakasaheb, who observes in an anxious tone:

“It is really necessary for Jaisingh to write
all these things, under his own name?
Can’t he write them” from our correspondent?”

The phone calls also serve to indicate how slavish and claustrophobic Sarita has been reduced to, having been married to Jadav. She is expected to note down each call and if she fails to do so, Jadav gets furious with her and abuses her. These phone calls also help the playwright to save on several incidents powerfully conveyed through indirect suggestions. As for the use of lightning in the play, darkness descends on the stage, for instance, at one point in the opening scene. It is used to indicate the passage of time from morning to afternoon. The lights gradually grow dim in the middle of the second Act to indicate that Sarita, sitting alone in the drawing room, is deeply withdrawn into her inner self and hence, shut out from the day light world outside. Again, it is here in the dimly lit drawing room that Sarita and *Kamala* converse with each other. The stage directions in *Kamala* are as elaborate and abundant as in *Silence!* Which help the readers get at the root of the tensions in the minds of Jadav and Sarita. Throughout the play, Jadav is tense and his tension is reflected in the abruptness of his actions and words.

To Conclude, structurally both *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kamala* are free from any easily recognizable flaw and both of them are compact. The plot evolves and unfolds rather imperceptibly. These are elements of surprise and suspense in them, which make the spectacular sit on edge, eagerly looking forward to the next turn of events. ‘Reversals’ in both *Silence!* and *Kamala* surprise not only the characters with play but the readers and spectators as well. The radical change that comes over Benare in *Silence!* and Sarita in *Kamala* surprise. The audience has the satisfaction of having witnessed a few rarified moments of pure aesthetic delight and intellectual insight divined by an extremely powerful artist.

Works Cited

1. Banerjee, Arundhati. Vijay Tendulkar.
Five Plays.
Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1992.
 2. Chari, A. Jagamohan. *The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar*.
New Quest. 67. Jan. – Feb. 1988.
 3. Dubbe, P.D. Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session*.
Indian Scholar. Vol.7, 1-11 Jan.-July 1985.
 4. Reddy, P. Obula. Cruelty in Family and Society
in Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala*.
Vol.39, 11, 2004. Print.
-