

PROTEST IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S 'ENCOUNTER IN UMBUGLAND'

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Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the influential and controversial dramatists. He was a famous journalist in Marathi. He is also screen and television writer, literary essayist and social commentator. Tendulkar deals with individual's struggle for existence in the society. In Tendulkar's plays women are at the centre. The action of the play revolves around women. Protest is also seen in his plays. A woman attempts to get self-identity in the play 'Encounter in Umbugland'. In this play we can see the dominance of collectivist culture and patriarchal society. Here we see the conflict of individual and a group. We see inequality that leads to discrimination between man and woman. 'Encounter in Umbugland' was written in 1968 in Marathi as 'Dambadwipcha Mukabala' by Vijay Tendulkar. Vijaya becomes the queen with the help of friend and guide Prannarayan. Tendulkar has exposed the hypocrisy of the political leaders in this play. The play is about the conflict between Queen Vijaya of Umbugland and her cabinet ministers. From the beginning we could see the struggle of woman named Vijaya against male ministers who tries to overpower her. The struggle is for political supremacy. The cabinet ministers tries to play dirty game of politics. Queen Vijaya becomes a victorious woman before the threatening men. Her protest is inspiring to world women.

Key-Words - Protest, Struggle ,Conflict , politics ,Game, Hypocrisy, Patriarchy, Woman Victory.

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Vijay Tendulkar is one of the influential and controversial dramatists. He was a famous journalist in Marathi. He is also screen and television writer, literary essayist and social commentator. He is well reputed dramatist like Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar and Girish Karnad. Tendulkar explored violence as in domestic, sexual, communal and political domain. His plays are like ringing bells to all human beings to awake and stop this violence in society. Our society is in danger so we should aware and awake. As a sensible dramatist, he evokes his anger against all types of violence. He acquired the epithet of 'angry young man' of Marathi theatre. He was inspired by everything around him and real life experiences. He is also a winner of several national and international awards and fellowship.

Vijay Tendulkar picks up contemporary theories and problems and tries to pose the dilemmas of human life. His art emerges from his individualistic, inwardly felt awareness of man's confrontation with social flux, the forces that mark the complexity of modern life. Tendulkar's art is marked by many innovations in techniques and subject. The conflict between tradition and modernity is also seen. He does not consider the occurrence of human violence as something loathsome or ugly, as it is innate in human nature. He believes that violence is a basic quality in human. The anger and frustration of these young men and women is expressed in their rejection of the conventional or traditional values and norms. So we see the cruelty of the protagonists. They offer the world which is not cultural. Human world can't understand their intention, feeling and sense of humanity. Tendulkar explores human mind and its complexities in all depth and variety. He presents man-woman relationship in terms of sensuality and violence rather than love and affection. So Tendulkar is called anti-romantic playwright.

Tendulkar was a great humanist. His intention was to bring change in society and its people. Whatever the life presented in his play is realistic. But it makes us introspective. His plays are helpful to human being to being human. Tendulkar deals with individual's struggle for existence in the society. In Tendulkar's plays women are at the centre. The action of the play

revolves around women. Protest is also seen in his plays. A woman attempts to get self-identity in the play 'Encounter in Umbugland'. In this play we can see the dominance of collectivist culture and patriarchal society. Here we see the conflict of individual and a group. We see inequality that leads to discrimination between man and woman. Majority of the women have been suffering under the male dominance. Women are treated as subordinate though they are bread winner. They have never any right in decision making. Women have to keep their views with them, they are not allowed to express it. If the woman follows these norms set by men, she is considered as an ideal woman. If she challenges to these norms she is called as a rebellious.

Women are as strong as men. But the patriarchal set up oppresses their desires and dreams. Men inflict injustice and violence against her. Her condition deteriorates due to male supremacy. She becomes the slave or an object for him. With advent of Modern age we see the changing image of woman in literature. She no longer suffers her miseries mutely but protests it vehemently. Protest is strong means to express disagreement, disapproval or opposition. Tendulkar's translated plays contain violence and injustice imposed on women. But his 'Encounter in Umbugland' is considered as an exceptional play where female protagonist protests and surpasses the male egoism.

'Encounter in Umbugland' was written in 1968 in Marathi as 'Dambadwipcha Mukabala' by Vijay Tendulkar. It was translated into English by Priya Adarkar. It is an allegorical play about the political scenario in India of the sixties. When Pandit Nehru had died then a question arose 'who will P.M. after Nehru?' This play also echoes the same question, "After vichitravirya who?" the chorus repeatedly raises the question. Princess Vijaya stands for the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. After the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri there was political war between leaders about to choose P.M. The senior leaders of the Congress party at last chose Indira Gandhi as a P.M. Some leaders were in the view that she is not experienced in politics and would be a rubber stamp. But very soon Indira Gandhi became perfect politician and handled the situation cleverly and kept hold on ministers.

Vijaya becomes the queen with the help of friend and guide Prannarayan. Tendulkar has exposed the hypocrisy of the political leaders in this play. The play is about the conflict between Queen Vijaya of Umbugland and her cabinet ministers like Pishtakeshi, Karkashirsha, Vratyason, Aranyaketu and Bhagadanta. From the beginning we could see the struggle of woman named Vijaya against all men who tries to overpower her. The struggle is for political supremacy. The cabinet ministers tries to play dirty game of politics.

The play begins with the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of king Vichitravirya's coronation. Prannarayan is a eunuch attendant and caretaker of the queen Vijaya. Both have a lot of love. He is also the chorus in the play. He describes and glorifies the powerful king Vichitravirya. But now he is died. King Vichitravirya treated his ministers as a dictator. He keeps them always awaiting. Now they all wish to rule the country after king's death. They all are corrupt and the king had all information about their acts.

The five members of the cabinet praise the king. But these selfish politicians were awaiting the king's death. So now after king's death they wanted to take power in their hand. All the ministers wanted Vijaya as a puppet in their hands.

"She (Vijaya)'ll be the rule we'll be the rulers! An excellent plan till we agree on a firm decision." (Tendulkar 293)

The protest of Queen Vijaya is seen after king's death. Vijaya learns all about ruling from Prannarayan. When all ministers wanted to meet her she didn't allow them but told to wait them as her father did. When she became the Queen all ministers were treating her as a child but she told them to follow protocol of court to bow to the queen. She also told them to address her as 'her majesty'. Thus she never became a victim of their sweet words. She also warned them to follow the court etiquettes. She shows that Queen Vijaya will not be spoon fed like child by them in any of the matters. Vijaya is also seen as a powerful woman like ministers. She makes her decisions. She dares to speak before the cabinet of her status. She makes them realize their place and her position. She has power and knows how to use it. There could see her protest as a powerful woman.

In the beginning she was very childlike and it was very difficult for her to be a queen. But Prannarayan guided and counselled her to follow the ways of power. The conflict between Vijaya and cabinet grows when Vijaya started to visit different parts of Umbugland. She mixed with people very soon. She met poor and downtrodden people. So she became very popular in Umbugland. All ministers failed to make her puppet. She took all her decisions. She never asked them about any decision. So they were useless and without power. All the ministers wanted her to be powerless but the powerful and clever Vijaya made them powerless. Now they are controlled by her. We see her self-awareness and self-reliance i.e. protests of an individual to get her right.

Queen Vijaya visited to the Kadamba tribe which infuriates the minister who were expecting her never to go out of their frame work. Even they didn't allow her to interact with people. They tried but failed to pursue her. We can see their agitation in the following dialogues-

Vratyasom: It doesn't seem according to our earlier expectations. She isn't prepared to confine herself prudently to the framework we've prepared for her. Let's put it in unvarnished terms. We placed her on the throne, and now she wants to plant one foot firmly on it and the other on us! Eh, Pishtakeshi? Aranyaketu here has met her personally several times. And given her several presents. But he has failed to bring her round. He can report more authoritatively on the situation.

Aranyakety: I did indeed meet her. But I didn't do so with motive you mention.
Not at all. (Tendulkar 205)

Queen Vijaya successfully completes her first year in office. She tells Prannarayan that she has given final shape to a plan for the rehabilitation of the kadamba tribe. Kadamba tribe is the oldest and poorest inhabitants of umbugland. Queen Vijaya met some people of kadamba tribe and that opened Vijaya's eyes. When her father was king all the cabinet ministers neglected Kadamba tribe. So Vijaya decided to uplift these people. Vijay expresses;

This plan will raise my stature on the island. I will get the credit for achieving what has never been achieved before. This plan will make everyone understand that I am not just my father's daughter, nor a puppet ruler. From now on I plan to rule in earnest. (Tendulkar 317)

This was great opportunity for Queen Vijaya to show her talent as a queen and a decision maker. Everyone understands that she was not a puppet ruler. Karkashirsha, Vratysom and pishtakeshi openly opposed her. They walked out. But queen Vijaya is firm on her decision when she realized that she will not get the approval of her cabinet. At last she gives an order to implement her plan for the rehabilitation of the Kadambas. All the ministers were against her so they persuaded people against queen Vijaya. Tendulkar here focuses on the dirty game of politics .To gain power people follow mean way. Vijaya is a powerful woman who protests them.

The play projects how falsehood has become an inevitable part of the politician's life, the ultimate result of which is hypocritical behaviour. The play consists of a critique not only on the rulers but on the ruled also. Both of them are mentally deformed. The rulers go on deceiving their subjects and the subjects blindly trust their leaders. (Wadikar, 66)

The palace is besieged by a mob but queen Vijaya keeps her mind cool. She orders soldiers to take action. Ministers were also expressing their anger as mob against queen. Prannarayan informs queen that the mob is going to set fire to the palace. So she goes before the mob and says we are agreeing to the cabinet's request. All were happy with it. Then queen comes again and says-

We said, 'we shall institute a public inquiry into the private property of our Ministers, who have today gone against the interests of the people.' At that, the crowd brightened up. We said, 'Those ministers who are found guilty will be severely punished.' The crowd brightened up still further. We shouted, 'Down with the Cabinet.' The crowd shouted it back louder than us. Didn't it, Attendant?----- While the crowd were shouting your names, we promised to hand you over to them, and to meet them from time to time hereafter. And then we left to the sound of cheering. (Tendulkar 353-354)

When all Ministers heard it they begged queen Vijaya to save them and to protect their cabinet. Queen vijaya was happy as she has turned the table against them. The play ends with Queen's complete control or hold on her cabinet. Queen Vijaya appears as an intelligent, clever and victorious ruler.

Shailaja Wadikar Observes:

She symbolizes the image of new woman who is morally well-built, emotionally well-controlled, clear-headed and clever. She rejects the treacherous plans of her advisers and turns the table on them at last. She is one of those rebellious and assertive women, who is capable of controlling not only her individual fate but the nation's destiny also. In the political crisis, Vijaya succeeds against her rivals as she controls the situation and brings the crisis to an end, and imposes her own will on her subjects instead of allowing herself to be dictated by others. She is rational-guided by reason. She has the capacity to transform her dreams or plans into reality. She is the representative of the iron-willed dictators who believe in the dictum: "My mind is my master and my thoughts are my power. (Horizon 68)

We see the struggle of queen Vijaya who becomes a victorious woman before the threatening men. At last she controls the cabinet Ministers in her hand. Her protest is not only her own but the protest of all women in the world.

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