



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Presentation of local lad Samant by Vijay Tendulkar in Silence! The Court is in Session

Name: Ramen Goswami
Magadh University, Bodh Gaya
(English Department)

Abstract: Samant acts as a 'sutradhar' (Sanskrit dramatic component) in Tendulkar's **Silence! The Court is in Session** because he does not participate in the main action though he often introduces it. In the European dramatic tradition, especially in the Greek tragedies, the chorus performs the same function. Both these traditions coalesce in the structure of the Marathi drama. Tendulkar, in **Silence ...**, has created the character of Samant along the lines of chorus/sutradhar, but has made him an integral part of the action.

Keywords: village, bachelor, innocent, servant, witness, comments, court, humour

Samant is the local village lad that escorts the amateur dramatic troupe members from Bombay to the village hall where they are going to stage the trial of President Johnson later on that night. We first see him in the company of Miss Benare when he conducts to the village hall. He feels awfully remorseful when Miss Benare gets her finger on the door latch. Benare feels gay and jocular in Samant's company. She feels at ease with this naive stranger and makes a sudden confidential proposal: "Let's leave everyone behind, I thought and go somewhere far, far away with you!" From his chat with Miss Benare we come to know that he is a bachelor and the 'green cloth parrot' that he has bought is for his nephew.

Samant shows Benare the magic of cutting a tongue and putting it together again. Benare gets close to him and enjoys the corporeal propinquity with Samant. But he is innocent and totally apathetic. Samant's innocence and his good companionship stir her secret disclosures to unburden her heart. He sympathizes with her in her agony. He is fond of reading the sensational novels of Suryakanta Phataphekar. Yet, somehow Samant secures an importance in the play not merely as the fourth witness but also as a spectator and reviewer and final comforter of human misfortune and aggravation. When the other members of the group come, Samant is overawed by Ponshe's Sahib-like facade. The city people treat him as a servant and ask him to buy tea, cigarettes, pan, bidies etc. he tells Ponshe that in the village they can not get tea with sugar, as sugar is very scarce those days but they can get tea with gur if they do not have any objection.

Samant being a simple inhabitant thinks that President Johnson from America will come there to the village and he will be tried for his felony of producing atomic weapons. Later on Rokde clears his misconception and tells him that it is only a mock trial where the actors take diverse roles. When Sukhatme picks Samant up to play the role of the fourth witness in the place of Rawte, who is absent, he becomes very much panicky and tells the lawyer that he does not know anything about court procedures. Mrs. Kashikar and others give him assurance and guidance and it makes him make a good show of his role. During the course of the mock-trial of Benare, he enjoys the quips, jokes and retorts in the court. Mrs. Kashikar helps him to winnow the frivolities and digressions in the court proceedings. Samant while enjoying the bone-tickling

humorous incidents in the court also contributes to the general stock by his own funny comments and behaviour.

When Sukhatme asks him to continue from the point where Balu left and inform the court what he saw at Prof. Damle's house after Balu had left the place. Samant is puzzled. He tells Sukhatme if he is mixing up things. He clandestinely reads out a set piece from a novel which resembles Benare's affair with Prof. Damle. Samant also identifies himself with the hero of the novel with the emphasis that 'he' means 'me'. Treating the whole testimony as a joke, an absurdity, he goes on impersonating the hero of the novel. As he says, "I rang the bell. The door opened....would not he"? In this way, Samant emphatically asserts that the man was Prof. Damle and the woman, Miss Benare. Against his assertion of Prof. Damle's and Benare's identities Benare overreacts, saying that he is telling barefaced lies. Giving terrifying laugh Samant confess before all that he was reading out from a novel, but it is not known to him that the game has already changed its dimension and colour.

Though he lives in a parish, he is not mediocre in shrewdness to the metropolitan people, but diverse from them in his outlook to life. Unlike the city people, he dislikes to throw out his life in any sort of complexities. He wants to enjoy life with altruistic feeling. In addition, he gets contentment watching magic shows, theatre, as well as reading sensational novels. Having no dearth of income, yet he likes to lead a bachelor's life. He is well aware of the communal status of the village women who, he narrates to Benare, execute only devotional songs like *bhagans* on the stage after their chores at night fall. Unlike the actors and actresses of the Progressive Association, he has no mission to disseminate enlighten ideas. He seems to equate life with magic, which is '*something yet nothing, nothing yet something*'.

However, simple, naive, kind, devoid of urban complexities and sadism, Samant came with an intention to be the spectator of the mock-trial of American President Johnson, but his choice is altered by the persuasion of the actors and actresses of Sonar Moti Progressive Association. Due to the absence of two regular actors, he is chosen as the fourth witness. They order him to fetch *pan, beedis, tea, cigarettes*, and like an obedient bearer he carries out their order. In the meantime Tendulkar, through him, focuses on a topical issue of sugar crisis occurred during 1960s, as a result of which mostly the people in the villages turned to the use of gur for making tea.

Chosen as the fourth witness and plunged in the game of mock trial of a woman, Samant treats it light heartedly and likes to be carried away by it for an amusement without knowing that the cup of game would be filled with venom. His ordinary sense fails to realize the intrigues of the urban actors and actress who are stoppage in life. He does not yet know that they will use one of their associates as site to enact their unfulfilled desires. Finding himself amongst them he enjoys fun, jokes, banter, jibes and retorts in the court room. Even he dares to protest against Sukhatme's suspicion of Benare's character with an argument that when he was alone with her before their arrival on the stage, he did not any indecency in her character.

In the path of giving witness he foregrounds his own sense of humour, creative and interactive power. He clandestinely reads out a set piece from a novel which resembles Benare's affair with Prof. Damle. Samant also identifies himself with the hero of the novel with the emphasis that 'he' means 'me'. Treating the whole testimony as a joke, an absurdity, he goes on impersonating the hero of the novel. As he says, "I rang the bell. The door opened....would not he"? In this way, Samant emphatically asserts that the man was Prof. Damle and the woman, Miss Benare. Against his assertion of Prof. Damle's and Benare's identities Benare overreacts, saying that he is telling barefaced lies. Giving terrifying laugh Samant confess before all that he was reading out from a novel, but it is not known to him that the game has already changed its dimension and colour. It is Samant who unknowingly lands her in the claustrophobic atmosphere.

Perhaps Samant's adore for his mother drives him to take part with another expectant woman. It does not matter to him whether she is unwed or wed mother. Perhaps with this feeling for other he places the green cloth parrot before Benare-the sight of which makes effect on the latter; she stirs a

little. In making him put the parrot in front of her, Tendulkar seems to invoke that there are some persons like Samant who are willing to give protection of the helpless woman like Benare.

In the Act I, Samant is an outsider—a guide who brings the members of The Sonar Moti Tenement Progressive Association to the community hall of a small urban town. A simple rustic—uneducated in the urban wiles and cleverness—Samant's spontaneous friendliness towards the members of the group in general and towards Benare in particular endears him to them so that they immediately take advantage and start exploiting his goodness and innocence. Kashikar, Ponshe, Sukhatme and others order him to fetch Paan, bidies and cigarettes. It is clear that when Benare was alone with Samant in the hall she tried to seduce him—endear herself to him—so that he could be coerced into a relationship with her. His respect for women is traditional but this does not encourage him to adopt a judgmental position and evaluate from the norm. He has not seen a real court in his life. President Johnson too does not affect either judgment or his sense of social justice in any way. The play—for him—is therefore clubbed together with other forms of entertainment like the magic shows.

In Act II, he is carried away by the 'game' and takes a light hearted, jovial view of it. He clandestinely reads out a set piece from a novel which resembles Benare's affair with Prof. Damle. Samant also identifies himself with the hero of the novel with the emphasis that 'he' means 'me'. Treating the whole testimony as a joke, an absurdity, he goes on impersonating the hero of the novel. As he says, "I rang the bell. The door opened...would not he"? In this way, Samant emphatically asserts that the man was Prof. Damle and the woman, Miss Benare. Against his assertion of Prof. Damle's and Benare's identities Benare overreacts, saying that he is telling barefaced lies. Giving terrifying laugh Samant confess before all that he was reading out from a novel, but it is not known to him that the game has already changed its dimension and colour. Mrs. Kashikar and Sukhatme encourage him to continue and provide them with a full account of the scandal while Benare—quite ineffectually—threatens him to stop. His testimony forces Benare to walk out from the hall and she finds to her dismay that the door is accidentally locked from outside.

In the beginning of Act III, when Samant finds Mrs. Kashikar pulling Benare back to her box, he gently asks her to treat the matter sportingly: "Why not get it over with, Miss Benare? It's all a game". Samant is an ordinary man harboring commonplace feelings. For this reason he remains a mute spectator, mumbling sympathetic words for the tormented as the trial assumes sinister dimensions. Of course, it is Samant, who is responsible for trapping of Benare, because in Act II Samant, came lastly on that door being aware of the fact that the bolt is not properly pulled back.

Samant does not say anything to Benare because he knows that words can not soothe her. He, "gently, affectionately, and with great respect...puts the green cloth parrot in front of her, from a distance", and goes out. This ambiguous action perhaps signifies of solidarity for Benare in an unfriendly world it also signifies that Samant is willing to take the responsibility of the child in her womb.

References:

Silence The Court is in Session- Oxford University Press, publishing 1978

Silence The Court is in Session -Ray Book Concern,2 Shyama Charan De Street, publishing2009