**Week 2: Vijay Tendulkar**

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## Lecture 5: Silence! The Court is in Session.

- The play describes the patriarchal enslavement of woman within the space of a court and a mock trial.
- The court symbolizes the space of patriarchy where Miss. Benare is trapped twice. What begins as a mock trial can no longer by distinguished from the actual play within the play by the end.
- Benare betrays her own 'crime' of bearing an illegitimate child outside marriage and falling in love with a married man named Prof. Damle, who never appears on stage despite the fact that he is also responsible.
- Miss. Benare's songs and poems suggest her own sense of isolation and loneliness. She is accused of being sexually promiscuous and of a disreputable character by the other characters.
- The male characters of the play including Sukhatme and Ponkshe wish to have a relationship with a bold woman like her but end up distancing themselves from her because she does not conform to the ideal of a chaste woman/wife.
- She is charged with infanticide even before her crime has been determined. She is condemned to be punished and shamed because she has desecrated the institution of marriage and motherhood.

- Her monologue is hardly a defense against the charges. It is more a conversation with herself about the significance of life and her own desire to live, to be a reputed schoolteacher.
- She occasionally ridicules the other characters who are all struggling and insecure actors. But she is progressively silenced and her voice is usurped by other characters including Mrs. Kashikar who is also a participant and beneficiary of patriarchy even though she is often humiliated and silenced by her own husband.
- Even Samant who is initially an innocent villager and watcher gets involved in the conspiratorial machinations of patriarchy to trap and victimize a woman for her unconventional life.
- Miss Benare claims Prof. Damle loved her for her body while she worshipped his intellect. The other characters like Ponkshe and Sukhatme accuse her of trying to seduce them when she wanted a man to love and be a father to her child. Karnik believes she had an affair with her uncle when she was young.
- Benare has an ambiguous relationship to her body, which is a vehicle for movement and freedom but also condemned to be stigmatized by others.

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**Lecture 6: A Friend's Story.**

- The play is narrated by an unconventional man, Bapu, who recounts his friendship with Sumitra. The play switches between past and present as Bapu steps in and out of his character as the narrator and a character in the play.
- Bapu is a sensitive and gentle man who is secretly in love with Sumitra but withdraws when he learns she is lesbian. His roommate Pande is infatuated with Sumitra when he sees her playing a man in a play he organized for the college where they study.
- Sumitra is obsessed with Nama a young woman she acts in the play with but she has a boyfriend named Dalvi who is a conventional and aggressive macho man.
- Dalvi resents and violently hates Sumitra for being lesbian and there is a violent altercation between them when he discovers her with Nama in Bapu's room.

- When Sumitra takes advantage of Bapu's friendship and forges his handwriting and signature to write a love letter to Nama and warn Dalvi, Dalvi assaults Bapu.
- Sumitra shows no remorse for what she has gotten Bapu into. Bapu remains a gentle and caring friend who tries to convince Sumitra to give up her obsession for Nama. But Sumitra is a narcissistic character, who does not showing her vulnerability to anyone and need Nama to validate herself. She remains an isolated character who tried to end her life twice in the play when her family rejects her and she discovers she is lesbian.
- Nama stops seeing her and it becomes clear that there is no difference between Sumitra and Dalvi's love for her, both of whom are possessive and indifferent to her own feelings. Bapu ends up feeling used by both Sumitra and Dalvi who want his room for their rendezvous with Nama.
- Nama confides in Bapu telling him of her plans to get married to another man in Calcutta. Bapu feels bad for Sumitra and tells her. But she betrays his trust and goes in search of Nama but in vain. The latter gets married and Sumitra is completely lost.
- Pande withdraws and joins the second world war as a soldier. When he returns he meets Dalvi and Bapu and the three of them visit a bar where they see Sumitra drunk performing before a group of officers.
- This is the only time she exposes her vulnerability and considers Bapu the mother she never had. She misses their friendship but by the end of the play she successfully ends up committing suicide.

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**Lecture 7: Ghashiram Kotwal.**

- The play takes the form of a choral song and dance performance that depicts the hollowness of political power. The play is a political satire set during the 18$^{th}$ century and describes the court life of Nana Phadnavis , one of the prominent ministers of the Peshwa of Pune. It was first performed in 1972.
- Ghashiram is a Brahmin from Kanauj who is humiliated and beaten up by the Pune Brahmins for winning the Nana's favour. He is made Kotwal of Pune in exchange for his daughter, Gauri, who is to satisfy Nana's lust.

- Ghashiram takes his revenge by turning Pune into a moral police state where no one has any freedom to do anything without his permission. In his attempt to fight the powers of brahminism, he becomes more tyrannical than the forces he opposes.
- The chorus of men who form props and characters, function to expose the irony of religious piety and the violence and greed that fuels political ambition and power.
- Ghashiram believes he is all powerful but realizes his power is merely derivative of the Nana who is himself a deputy of the Peshwa who never appears on stage. The play is about the deputation of power and how people can never recognize the true source of power.
- When Ghashiram discovers his daughter is missing and probably dead, he is unable to resist the Nana. The nana marries another young girl.
- Finally Ghashiram is beaten up and killed by the mobs for his tyranny while he realizes his guilt for having sacrificed his own daughter for his political ambitions.

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