
Research Papers



**DEPICTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S
PLAY SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION.**

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Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar is a leading contemporary Indian playwright. His Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe (1967) is a well known Marathi play. Priya Adarkar translated it as Silence! The Court is in Session (1978). He emerged as an artist with national reputation and recognition. In his plays he successfully depicts the social problems. He looks at the problems of society from a new and original angle. Over the past century there has been a great increase in number of women in the labor force. Though there has been a lot of advocacy towards bringing equality. It is still a farfetched idea. Women's contribution to the present day business is very significant and rapid increasing. But women still have to face a lot of challenges to acquire a status of equality. Apart from economic independence work is an essential means of enabling a person to develop a sense of identity and self-esteem.

Silence! The Court is in Session is his best known play. In this play Tendulkar has depicted the plight of a young educated urban woman in a male dominated society. A traditional male-dominated middle class society is reluctant to any social change. Benare, the heroine of the play is in search of a happy life after a few frustrations in her life. But society does not allow her to live quietly.

Benare is an educated woman of about 34 years. She is a school teacher by profession. She loves life and is full of spirits. She is very proud of her performance as a teacher and feels that her life is her own and no one has got the right to interfere in it. She is a member of an amateur dramatic association which stages plays in different places to create public consciousness on some social or sociological issues. Currently the dramatic trope has taken up the issue of educating the people about procedures of a court of law.

Silence! The Court is in Session presents the course of a mock trial where Benare, as the

accused, is tried for an imaginary crime of infanticide. Though the trial is conducted in a game like and non-serious manner, it exposes the past life of Benare and authenticates the feeling of superiority of men over women in Indian society. The play Silence! The court is in Session deals with the mental state of educated woman in a traditionally male dominated Indian Society. The so called social workers like Kashikar and his troupe show social concern for social reform. They are known for their double standards attitude. Tendulkar has expressed his attitude towards such people in the society. He attacked ironically and satirically throughout the play.

In Silence! Court is in Session he directs his criticism against the hypocritical male attitude in Indian society where a woman is quite suppressed and any small attempt by a woman for her freedom is highly deteriorated. Tendulkar in highly artistic manner withdraw from making any statement which saves the play from being

propaganda. A play, in order to be staged successfully needs to be rehearsed. The main body of play concerns the rehearsal of a drama on the theme of a court trial of an accused on some imaginary charges. Act- I exhibits that all preparations for such a rehearsal of a mock court trial have been made. Act- I, is an introduction to the main action of the real play which starts in Act-II. The play begins with the arrival of the dramatic troupe in a village to stage a mock trial of a court in order to educate the rural folk about the functioning of a court of law. Since they arrive in the village much before the time of the actual performance they plan to spend the prime period of time in some sort of a game like activity.

The rehearsal of the play in the village suggests the main action of play. A detail analysis of Act- I reveal the entire course of the drama. While engaged in conversation with Samant. Benare tells him about her experiences as a popular teacher in a school. She further narrates how people around her are jealous for which they have instituted an enquiry against her for one bit of slander. This slander relates to her affair with Professor Damley as it has been shown in the course of her trial as the accused. She argues: Is that any kind of reason for throwing me out? Who are these people to say what I can or can't do? My life is my own...I haven't sold it to anyone for a job. My will is my own. My wishes are my own. No one can kill that...anyone. I ll do what with myself and my life. (5)

She is demolished to silent suffering by the society around her. She is tricked into a trap by her associates of the theatre-troupe. In this play, All through Act I, the playwright endeavors to create a game-like and lack-serious atmosphere, But in the course of the mock trial, much light has been thrown into the past life of Benare. The imaginary charge labeled against her personal life. So fact and fiction combine in the course of the play. The trial of Benare is the main theme of the play. The mock trial starts in Act II. The real action of the drama, begins with Kahikar's declaration that Benare, the accused, has been charged under Section 302 of Indian Penal Code.

Actually this trial of Benare crops up like a play-within a play with the intention of exposing the private and personal life of Benare. This trial begins in a light-hearted and non-serious way but gradually takes on a serious turn the moment the private life of Benare is brought into the corpus of the plot. What begins as a game and fun becomes a serious comment on Benare's private life and the

society around her. This design is a well-conceived part of the structure of the play. Even though Act II is full of fun and mockery, it successfully exposes the hypocrisy existing in modern society. Not only does it educate the people about the trial in a real court of law but also it does make people conscious of the hypocrisy and artificiality that exists in our society. They decide to rehearse a mock trial with Benare as the accused. She becomes the central character in the mock court Kashikar acts as the judge and Sukhatme becomes the counsel for prosecution. When Kashikar thinks the attitude of the society, he observes:

Should revive the old custom of child marriage. Marry off the girls before puberty. All this promiscuity will come to a full stop (52)

In the course of the trial it is revealed that she had weaknesses for men. Besides it is revealed that as teenager she had an affair with her maternal uncle which was a failure. Then she came in contact with Prof. Damle who outwitted her. Thus she has been most cruelly treated by society. Kashikar calls her "A sinful canker on the body of society". She was feared to become a mother without marriage. In violation of the laws of society she has dared to champion "unmarried motherhood". She is completely broken by the decree of the mock-court that she is spared but the child in her womb is to be destroyed. Damley after she becomes pregnant by him shatters all her hopes. Yet she does not lose heart. She struggles against hostile forces to lead a happy life. But she is dismissed from her job for her promiscuity. Instead of helping her, society indicts her. Mrs. Kahikar is the wife of Mr. Kahikar. She is a middle-aged woman. She is domineering, energetic and uneducated. Even then she wants to pose herself as a snob. She talks like a sophisticated woman but acts like a village woman.

She has kept Rokde subdued like a slave because she has spent for his education. Mrs. Kashikar is a representative of the uneducated women who pose to be accomplished. Her desire is to give the airs of superiority in the play, but all the time, her mask is shed and her true color revealed. Mrs. Kashikar is an example of how most uneducated but vain and rustic women of India behave.

Silence! The Court is in Session is a problem play with a difference. In a problem play the protagonist's situation is so presented as to show that it represents a contemporary social or sociological problem. Also the dramatist uses a character of the play as the spokesman to highlight

the problem and its solution. Referring to the writer's attitude about the middle class, Kumud Mehta asserts:

In his earlier works he had dwelt on the woes of the middle class with a degree of sympathy, bordering on sentiment.¹

Tendulkar exposes this condition of women of the middle class family in the Indian context. Both Benare and Mrs. Kashikar are presented as women who have fallen victims to male supremacy in Indian society. They both are not free to act independently. Benare's attempt to lead an independent life of her own has been frustrated by the group of men surrounding her during the course of the mock trial. Her freedom has been mercilessly crushed. She argues:

Don't you think that maturity ... comes to a person only with experience? And experience comes with age, with a slightly unusual way of life.(62.)

She gradually becomes serious and depressed because all the male characters try to unravel her past life with a view of humiliating her. Even Mrs. Kashikar joins hands with them to expose her. When she visited Kashikar on his birthday he listens to the communication:

It is sin to be pregnant before marriage. It would be still more immoral to let such a woman teach, in such a condition: There is no alternative. This woman must be dismissed ... send the order for my signature this very day. (69)

It is further revealed that Benare is carrying the child of Damley in her womb. Karnik discloses the fact that Benare in her youth, was in love with her maternal uncle and when that affair ended in fiasco, she attempted suicide. Further it is disclosed in the court that after her pregnancy through Prof. Damley, Benare attempted to get married to anyone to save herself from defamation. Sukhatme points out to the court that man is liable to error and youth leads a person astray. He appeals to the court to keep this in view and take a lenient view of his client's alleged crime and show mercy to her for humanity's sake. Benare admits all her crimes. She points out that her private life is her own business. She will decide what to do with her; everyone should be able to do. Everyone has a manner and an aim in life. She refers to her love affair with her maternal uncle and Prof. Damle. She boldly admits her love affair with these two men. But she tells that both the men had deceived her. They only loved the flesh in her but not the woman in her. Neither of them had the boldness to marry her. She becomes meditative and says:

Life is like this. Life is so and so. Life is such. Life

is a book that goes ripping into pieces. Life is a poisonous snake that bites itself. Life is betrayal. Life is a fraud. Life is a drug. Life is drudgery. Life is a something that's nothing or a nothing that's something. (73)

Thus Benare represents "the sly new fashion of women earning that makes everything go wrong." According to the view of Mrs. Kashikar, "That's how promiscuity has spread throughout our society". Even Mrs. Kashikar does not hesitate to apply physical force to drag Benare to the dock. All these show how a woman who wants to lead an independent life is suppressed by the male dominated society.

The violence in the plays already raises its hood in these plays. In the persecution of Benare, a helpless woman, a fierce psychological violence becomes obvious. The characters of Sukhatme, Mr and Mrs. Kashikar, Ponkshe or even Rokde come to the front during the process of the trial. In depicting these characters, Tendulkar has explored their psyche to the extent of revealing the hidden sense of failure pervading their lives namely the inefficiency of Sukhatme as a lawyer, the childlessness of the Kashikar couple, the non fulfillment of Ponkshe's dreams to become a scientist, the vain attempts of Karnik to be a successful actor. Tendulkar handles the women's issue in a very skillful manner. Though he exposes male supremacy, he never becomes vocal about women's right. This artistic objectivity saves the play from being a mere propaganda play. Tendulkar also satirizes the so-called social workers like Mr. Kashikar who cling to the ideals of social work. They are hypocrites. They do not hesitate to exploit others. Kashikar and his wife exploit Rokde. This has been satirized in the play. Besides, Kashikar's strong invectives hurled at unmarried young girls reveal his male prejudiced attitude which had been derided in the play. Tendulkar is a controversial playwright for his ideas. Though *Silence! The Court is in Session* is not just a propaganda play, it contains bitter satire against the judiciary and the institutional social service organizations. It also points a finger at the male supremacy in Indian society where women are suppressed. So Tendulkar intends to make people conscious of these anomalies in Indian social life.

To establish the fact that conventional conduct should be modified by natural ethics, he presents his heroine Benare with an independent spirit to fact and fight against outdated traditions and customs. Benare has an affair with Prof.

Damley. She bears his child in her womb. He abandons her. Yet she tries to live happily. She proposes marriage to Ponshe and Rokde. They refuse. So she is forced to accept unmarried motherhood which is looked down upon in our society. She is accused of trying to dynamite the very roots of our tradition, our pride in ourselves, our culture and our religion.

In this play which consists of three acts .It has elaborate stage direction, which enables the action of the play become very lively. Playwright, Tendulkar supports feminists, so he highlights women as sufferer of the male hegemony and oppression. Women characters are depicted as helpless victim of the conspiracies originated by men class. Thus Benare ill-treated by the her friends and male characters.

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