

CONDITION OF A WOMAN IN A MIDDLE CLASS INDIAN SOCIETY IN CONTEXT OF VIJAY TENDULKAR'S PLAY 'SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION'

¹Dr. Sandip Patil Assistant Professor, SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Deemed to be University, Indore – 4533321, M.P

²Sunil Panthi Assistant Professor, Chameli Devi Group of Institutions, Indore - 452020, M.P

Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar's 'Silence! The Court is in Session' presents the true condition of women in middle class society. This paper is an attempt to investigate perception of middle class society which becomes the major cause of suffering for a woman. The paper primarily focuses on inequality between male and female in society. Various characters in the play represent the different classes of society. Leela Benare, protagonist of the play represents the modern Indian educated middle class woman who believes in individuality and freedom. All other characters of the play are symbolic who represent all types of people in society who have got different perception for women. Leela Benare represents the educated self dependent women; she is a school teacher by profession and takes her job very sincerely. She maintains perfect balance between her personal and professional life and enjoys every moment of life. Through in this play, Tendulkar shows that men never miss any opportunity to attack women, physically or psychologically and always try to keep her under control in this male dominated society. This play is a satire on justice system of society where a woman is charged for a crime and a man is set free for the same and holds no responsibility for that. Leela Benare is blamed for the guilt of being pregnant but not Prof. Damle where both were responsible for the child. The main aim of this research is to study the defeat of an educated, confident and self dependent woman in orthodox male dominated society.

Key words: Suffering, inequality, society, educated, self-dependent, freedom

Introduction

Drama is one of the highest forms of artistic expression which is not only a source of entertainment but one of the most effective sources to bring awareness and enlightenment in

society. Vijay Tendulkar who is one of the major play writers, chose different aspects of the same issue of feminism to bring awareness among the people against the orthodox tradition in the male dominated society. He raised voice against this orthodox society where rules are made only for females and the males are given the unspoken freedom from the same. The play, 'Silence! The Court is in Session', focuses on Indian middle class life in urban society where women are surpassed by males. The play was originally written in Marathi under the name 'Shant! Court Chalu Ahae', later it was translated into English by Priya Adarkar. The play was based on a 1956 short story Die Panne (Trapes) by Friedrich Durrenmatt. This play shows mental as well as physical suffering and harassment of central character, Leela Benare.

The play, 'Silence! The Court is in Session' starts with the preparation of a theater group 'The Sonar Moti Tonement Progressive Association' a group of teacher who were preparing of a stage play in a village. One of the members of the play did not turn out so a local stage hand was asked to change. To understand the procedure of the court a mock trial was performed for practice. A mock accuse of infanticide against Leela Benare was imposed. She is the protagonist of the play. This play starts with light mood but gradually turns out to be serious and gloomy. Leela Benare is unmarried and was responsible for unlawful child by Prof. Damble. Prof. Damble was missing cast of the trial. Witness after witness and charge after charge are imposed against her to spoil the morality of the society. Her private and personal life is exposed. Miss Leela Benare, protagonist of the play is an educated thirty four years old teacher. She represents the free modern woman who has modern concept of life. She believes in freedom and individuality of self. She very strongly believes in individual freedom and does not accept any interference of others. She says,

“My life is my own I have not sold it to anyone for a job.”

She is a woman who does not suffer or hide any harassment only due to social outlook; she freely exposed her maternal uncle who deflowered her at the age of fourteen.

“Why, I was barely fourteen! I did not know what offence was – I swear by my mother, I did not! I insisted on marriage. So I would live my beautiful, lovely dreams openly like others! But all including my mother –were opposing to it.”

This was the hurtful experience for her. This situation created thought of killing of her but she did not do it. This incident made her to look her own identity in this unfavorable society, where man has no emotional love for women; they are excited and hungry for the physical pleasure only. Despite this mistake, again she falls in love with Prof. Damble. She had complete faith in Damble and worships him like God. But he too like other men was hungry of physical pleasure and he used her to fulfill his lust and leave her. Tendulkar highlights discrimination of the society that excuses men; and women for the same type of offence charged differently. Benare's maternal uncle nowhere charged, in the same way Prof. Damble is only taken as a witness not culprit in the court. It is not only man who are responsible for the tragic condition of the women but other women who do not want to raise voice and keep silence against the violence. Benare's mother does not take any action or raises voice when Mrs. Kasikar pulls her to dock. She gave negative views by saying that,

“This young unmarried girl gets everything without marriage...how can Benare stay without marriage at the age of thirty four?”

Mrs. Kashikar who also opposes, and according to her

“Whole life is the family in which she brought to go ahead future life.”

But consequently, Leela Benare represents a progressive and educated life. She is bold, courageous and open minded lady who believes in the beauty of life by living it freely and in fullest way not under any suppression. Benare expresses free spirit of women who wants to break the traditional orthodoxy slavery of society. But finally when play is over Leela Benare was not able to come out of her character and she was left with many questions of society. Now she is silent against the behavior of male against female. It shows that how male dominated society suppresses female.

Conclusion

Vijay Tendulkar is a play writer who depicted the true picture of modern middle class women in different way. He emphasizes on the perspective of middle class Indian society which never changes for women. Women are fighting for their identity and freedom even after getting education, financially self dependability. Now women are educated and working outside, self

dependent still society has the same expectation from them. They consider them family animal that has no rights to go beyond set orthodox rules of society which need to be changed. This is an eye opening play for the today's generation to change their perception for the women. This play is not only social satire where Leela Benare is blamed for illegal pregnancy but not Damble who is also responsible. It is also a satire on Law; a judge is normally expected unbiased for male and female but court punished Leela Benare not Damble. Judge Mr. Kashikar says:

“The crimes you have committed are the most dreadful. There is no pardon for... them ...no memento of your offence should remain for the next generations. Hence this court hereby sentences that you shall live but child in your womb shall be smashed.”

How can court order to kill an infant? this is again a question. Vijay Tendulkar through this play raises many questions against Law of court and against society. Tendulkar also reveals how even a well educated confident self dependent woman in our middle class society tortured, distressed, suffered and exploited only because she is female and this is male dominated society.

References:

1. Tendulkar, Vijay, Silence! The court is in session, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).
2. Kumar Nand, Indian English Drama – A Study, (New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2003).
3. Amar Nath Prasad & Satish Barbuddhe (Ed.), The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar: Critical Explorations, (New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2008).
4. Amar Nath Prasad (Ed.), Indian Writing in English: Critical Ruminations, (New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2006).
5. Dhawan, R.K., Indian Literature today, (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1994).
6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shantata!_Court_Chalu_Aahe#La