“Silence! The Court Is In Session” By Vijay Tendulkar – A Study on the Defeat of Woman in Male dominated society

Dr. Indravadan G. Purohit
Associate Professor, Dept of English
B.R.S. College,
Mangrol, Gujarat (India)

Abstract: Vijay Tendulkar is unquestionably a grand Indian playwright and is famous for his comprehensive artistic genius. However his strong suit is the language Marathi, but the versions of his plays in English have fascinated and amazed the audience at a great extent. His main power comes into view from his devotion to usually Indian, particularly Hindu problems which are intensely deep-rooted in the Indian socio-cultural philosophy. “Silence! The court is in Session”, is one of the well highly praised plays of Vijay Tendulkar. The play discovers the anecdote of the relationship between Miss. Benare’s illicit and Prof. Damle. Tendulkar depicts the condition of women of the middle class family in Indian societal context. He reveals how women in our society are offended, suffered, distressed and exploited. The main aim of this research article is to study the defeat of woman in “Silence! The court is in session”

Keywords: Indian, Playwright, artistic, Court, silence.

1. ABOUT “SILENCE ! THE COURT IS IN SESSION”

Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe (Silence! The Court Is in Session) is a Marathi play written by great playwright Vijay Tendulkar and first performed in 1968, directed by Arvind Deshpande, with Sulbha Deshpande as the main lead. The play was written in 1963, for Rangayan, a Mumbai-based theatre group, however it was performed much later. It was inspired after the playwright overheard the conversation amongst the members of part-time theatre group traveling on Mumbai local train to perform a mock-trial at Vile Parle suburb. The play was based on a 1956 short-story, Die Panne (Traps) by Swiss playwright Friedrich Dürrenmatt.

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the famous Indian playwrights. He has strongly expressed the socio-political conditions in his plays. He appeared as a revolt against the traditional values of a primarily orthodox society with the production of “Silence! The Court is in Session” in 1967. The play was initially written in Marathi language and later translated into English by Priya Adarkar. Tendulkar has represented the dilemma of a young woman who is betrayed by the male-dominated society. A traditional male-dominated society cannot surrender its paralysed traditions and customs. The society resists the change to come. It is a sour satire against the social ills and an attempt to condemn the follies that exist in our society.

In the play, “Silence! The court is in session” with three acts Tendulkar initiates a theatre group called “The Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association”. In it we get a group of teachers who were preparing to stage a play in a village. It so turned out that one of the members of the cast didn’t shown. A local stagehand was asked to change him. A practice was set and a mock trial was performed on the stage to make him understand the procedure of the court. A mock accuse of infanticide was leveled against Miss. Benare one of the members of the show. Then the imagine play abruptly turned into a gloomy charge and it emerged from the witness that Miss. Benare did kill an unlawful child by Prof. Damle, the missing member of the cast. Miss. Benare is cross varified in the court with full contempt by the male vultures around her. Witness after witness, charge upon charge is mound upon her and her private life is exposed. He in this play describes how a young woman is made a casualty to conventions and disgraceful insincerity of the middle class male dominated society. Miss. Leela Benare, the heroine character of the play is an educated woman of about 34 years old and by profession she is school teacher. She loves life and is full of feelings. She believes that her life is her own and nobody has got the right to obstruct with it – “My life is my own. I haven’t sold it to anyone for a job.” Miss. Benare has spent through a very complicated stage in her life. She exposes the insincerity of some men who pulled up her plant of life. She tells how she was deflowered by her own maternal uncle at the age of fourteen years: “Why, I was barely fourteen! I did not know what offense was – I swear by my mother, I didn’t! I insisted on marriage. So I could live my beautiful, lovely dreams openly. Like others! But all of them including my mother – were opposite to it.

After this hurtful experience, she wanted to kill herself by any way but she didn’t. She looked for an identity of her own in an exclusively unfavorable society where men have little love for women; where men are more excited and hungry for the physical pleasures of women. Despite her previous mistake, again she falls in love with Prof. Damle, whom she worships as a Lord. But he too used her body for physical pleasure and turns his back to her. This dissertation and embarrassment is insufferable to a abandoned woman. In the court, Miss. Benare’s crimes of infanticide and unlawful maternity are recognized by the suit as crime against society. The mock trial holds reflect to our social response to ethical values. Sex is a private matter in one’s life, but there are definite social and ethical values also associated to it. Before marriage or after marriage sexual relations are condemned in society. The rules of society in practice are most severe for women than for men. Tendulkar highlights on the insincerity of the society that excuses men and women for the same types of offence. Benare’s maternal uncle no where expresses as charged of
committing incest with her. Likewise Prof. Damle is only a witness in the trial court of the case. While Benare is blamed of the society of law. We also find that the true opponent of a suffering woman in society is not only the social forbidden traditions, customs, rites and male prejudice, but also the unresponsive and cold dealing of a woman with other woman. Benare’s mother turns a deaf ear to her while Mrs. Kashikar, one of the members of the play carried out physical violence to pull her to the dock. She has negative views against her and does not hesitate to say that this young unmarried girl gets everything without marrying. She demonstrates her doubt, how can Benare stay without marriage at the age of thirty-four?” It is interesting that Mrs. Kashikar reflects here a traditional housewife who has no concern with the progressive and contemporary attitude of a young girl in the modern societal. According to her, her whole life is the family in which she is brought up and for which happiness she had to go ahead a future life. But consequently, Benare stands for a progressive and educated life. She wants to emerge out of the command of a patriarchal supremacy. Ms. Benare’s character recalls us of the unlike characters represented by the women novelists like Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De in their literary works. These novelists also uncovered the miseries of the women at the hands of the male dominated society. Except the character of the play, nearly all the other characters are suffering from cruelty and inferiority complex. Sukhatme is a failure lawyer, Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar has no issues, they are childless. Ponkshe is an interfailed scientist. Thus as Karnik is concerned, he is failed actor. The same is the case with Rokde, who failed to achieve an independent life. In other words we can say that these characters have no individuality of their own.

Tendulkar in his creation ‘Silence! The court is in session’ chooses a term of the legal register as the title of his play to make a influential command on society with a weighty patriarchal bias that makes justice unfeasible. A court is supposed to be a seat of justice, significance and respectability. All through this play, He also makes an assessment of the today’s court procedures, and finds out the problem of the ruinness of the court. The role of the judge in this play is itself – ironic a judge is normally free from prejudice and unusual uttering. But here the case is just otherwise. The judgement itself seems more ridiculous. Mr. Kashikar says to Benare : “The crime you have committed are most dreadful. There is no pardon for them … no momento of your offense should remain for next generations. Hence this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be smashed.” She is sensitively harassed but still starves to search for her survival. She has a immense tolerance to endure. She is the picture of blamelessness and sympathy. However she is offended at every stage, she has not done harm to any one. If she did harm to anyone, it is her own self. The difficulty and plunder of a weak woman has been best articulated in the play. He has always been controversial because he has always been contemporary in his concerns, both social, political and theatrical. All his plays deal with the domination of the weak by the powerful. He treats his female characters with understanding and compassion. ‘Silence! The court is in session’, is a naturalistic play.

REFERENCES