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GENDER ISSUES IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION*

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Gender equality means the rights to access equal liberty in every aspects of living, regardless of any gender. It entails even the concept that both the sex is free to set up their personal and professional career without the limitation by any prejudices. Usually awareness on such gender threats are visualised through literature. Drama is considered one such effective medium to criticize socio-cultural and political conflicts.

Vijay Tendulkar is a great Indian playwright who is known for his creative genius. His works always out spoke the indomitable controversies of our society which made him popular among readers. Through the publication of his Marathi drama *Shantata! Court chalu ahe* the English version of which is *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Tendulkar achieved national recognition. Tendulkar in his drama manifests the issues on gender identity prevailing in so called "developed society". Tendulkar's "silence" in the very title of this drama provides a keen knowledge on the ignored voice of women in a patriarchal society. This even shows how law acts as an aid in silencing the expression of women. It provides a vivid idea on how society plays a prominent role in subjugating the weaker sex to sustain the patriarchal rule indirectly. He employs multifaceted skills in his drama to convey his theme highly effectual.

This drama revolves around the character Miss. Leela Benare. She is a well educated woman and a teacher by profession. She is also a member in an amateur drama theatre group. In this drama this group moves to a village to entertain people. During the practise the members of the troop decides to enact a new mock trial, other than the one to be staged, in - order to make a new comer understand. The whole troop with no second opinion decides to accuse Benare. The co-actors intervene in her personal life and accuse her as an immoral woman. She is then considered as the sole responsibility for her pregnancy by all other co-actors. As the drama moves forth, it is revealed that the whole plot is about Benare's personal trait. Then she is also brutally been criticised for trying to seduce other male members of the drama troop into marriage. Throughout the trial Benare is condemned for her situation but Mr.Damle, the one responsible for her condition does not regret for his mistake. This mock trial ends with the judgement of infanticide which Benare could never accept even as a mock judgement.

In this drama it is further revealed that Benare was in a love relationship with her maternal uncle. She accepts it and tries to explain how her relationship with her uncle, had end up in fiasco. But the court remains deaf for all her grievances. Her next relationship with Prof.Damle also had a bad end. She confesses that "It isn't love at all... it is worship! But it was the same mistake. I offered my body on the altar of my worship. And intellectual God took her offering... and took his way" (Tendulkar 75). She adds to it pathetically that "He wasn't God. He was a man for whom everything was of the body, for the body that's all" (Tendulkar 75).

Though it is evident that Benare worshiped her love, her trust was shattered even after undergoing the betrayal she stands firm only for the child she carries, not minding the criticism. Her quest in search of a man is not for herself but for the sake of her child unborn. The mock trial ends with a brutal judgement of infanticide. As a mother of her unborn child, Benare cries but none comes forward to console her. Prof. Damle, the reason for her impregnate is not considered for his sin. Instead the court acts partial to him and proves

that the legal system is always inactive for women. The law acts lethargic for the mistakes of men and proves that the society is still male chauvinistic.

This drama depicts the sufferings of women who are still held captives in the name of culture and tradition. This is one among those few Indian works which centres on women protagonist. In such culture bound society, Benare stands unusual which is the only ultimate reason for her to be blamed. Here it is clear that the marital status of Benare plays a considerable part in defining her character by other co-actors. Benare is a usual woman who longs for true love throughout her journey of life and ends up being betrayed. In spite being betrayed Benare is not shown any consideration by the judiciary or society in the trial instead levied her brutal punishment of killing her own child which is in her womb. Though Benare strives hard to raise her voice for her justice, the whole society turns deaf for her request.

It is through the character Benare that the imbalanced structure of social hierarchy is identified especially when comes to gender identity. In this drama it is evident that the society condemns the chastity of a woman if she prolongs her marriage or stands out of usual women. From this it makes a clear picture that to create or retain a woman's identity she has to fight her own battles. This work of Tendulkar plays a major role in exposing the bitter truth of the society that the modernisation is still not in the reach for women. This work indeed raises a question whether equality persists irrespective of gender.

Works Cited

Tendulkar, Vijay. *Five Plays*: Vijay Tendulkar. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995. Print.
