

## **Denial of Chance to Leela Benare, the Lover of Life” in *Silence the Court is in Session***

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### **Abstract**

Vijay Tendulkar’s *Silence the Court is in Session* is originally written in Marathi as *Shantata Court Chalu Aahe* and translated into English. This play projects the male chauvanistic attitude of men in the patriarchal Indian society. How the men marginalize women in the society. The professionally unsuccessful men like Shukatme, Kashikar, Karnik tease and suppress the desires of Leela Benare, the successful professional woman.

**KEYWORDS:** male chauvinists, suppression, hypocrisy of male society ,silence .

Vijay Tendulkar, in his powerful play *Silence the Court is in Session* attacks the hypocrisy of the male chauvinist society. He severely attacks the patriarchal values and institutions and shows how law operates as an instrument in silencing the voice of the protagonist. The word ‘silence’ in the play literally means the judge’s order for maintaining silence in the court-room. But the author has used the term to imply the society silencing the weaker sex’s (women) plea for justice.

Vijay Tendulkar treats his women characters with understanding and compassion. He pities them against the selfish, ambitious ,hypocritical and brutally male society. In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, he portrays the futile struggle of a woman in the male-dominated society of post-Independent India.

Miss Benare ,the protagonist desperately fights her lone battle against the oppressive male chauvinists. Mr.Kashikar, is the Chairman of the The Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association. It is an amateur theatre group, to entertain the people of a village adjoining to Bombay by enacting the roles in a mock trial of American President Johnson who is considered to be the threat to humanity because of his policy regarding nuclear weapons. Miss Leela Benare, a school teacher, is a member of this theatre group. The other members of this group are the Kashikar couple, Balu Rokde, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik, Professor Damle and Rawte. Samant, an innocent and mild natured man of the village.

With an idea of passing the time, they decide to play a Mocktrial which will give a clear picture to Samant, who is going to act the Fourth Witness. The members of the Troupe decide to make Leela Benare as the accused in the Mock trial. They charge her with the crime of infanticide. . Here Tendulkar utilizes the opportunity to show the attitude and mental make-up of the members of the group. Everyone belittle the other in the group. Thus the author captures in miniature the entire middle class society in his play

Benare is going to be trialled under Section No. 302 of the Indian Penal Code. She is also accused of trying to seduce every male member of the group into marriage. She is suspected of having an illegal relationship with Prof. Damle, the father of five children, who remains absent throughout the play. Society cannot tolerate this unmarried expectant woman. She has been treated as “a sinful canker on the body of society”.(p.67)No one condemns Prof.Damle who is responsible for her worst cause. Tendulkar here focuses on the hypocritical double standard of the so-called civilized urban middle class society.

At the very beginning of the play Benare is presented as a lively, emotional but a self-assertive woman. She is deeply committed to her profession. But there are latent hints of her suppressed sufferings! But my teaching’s perfect. I’ve put my whole life into it—I’ve worn myself to a shadow in this job! Just because of one bit of slander, what can they do to me? [...] 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” (Silence, p.4-5).Benare is presented as self assertive and determined .She loves to live every single moment of her life.She emerges with her own individuality and identity as a modern woman.

In the course of the mocktrial , Sukhatme ,the lawyer in the trial questions her personal affairs.He is a failure in his profession , unable to withstand Benare as a successful teacher blames her.Sukhatme plays the role of both the counsel for the prosecution and the counsel for the accused. The whole trial becomes farcical. Except Samant, all the male characters try to exercise their power on Benare. Sukhatme accuses that her conduct has blackened all social and moral values. The accused is public enemy number one. If such socially destructive tendencies are encouraged to flourish, this country and its culture will be totally destroyed.

The frustrated male members of the society try to suppress women to prove their power and superiority in the social hierarchy. They praise motherhood with bombastic phrases but try to destroy Benare’s infant in the womb.Mr.Kashikar , the so called social activist finally proclaims that the unwedded mother should abort her illegitimate child because this would infect the entire society.

Benare in her soliloquy reveals her past. Her love for her maternal uncle is revealed and he exploited her and ran without marrying her. The bold and determined Benare tries to commit suicide by taking Tik 20, the pesticide. Her admiration for Prof.Damle is too high. She admires him as God of knowledge. But Prof.Damle has admired nothing but her body. She expresses her views about sex boldly.

Benare expresses her wish to bring up the child and wants to give better shelter for it. But the male chauvinists denies the chance to the lover of life. Everyone turns a deaf ear to the voice of the protagonist.

#### **Works Cited:**

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