THE PATRIARCHAL WALL OF SILENCE IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION

Dr. Kavya. B

Lecturer in English, Govt.Pre-University College, Hosur, K R. Nagar, Mysuru Dist.

ABSTRACT

The Padma Bhushan awardee Vijay Tendulkar is a well-known name in the Modern Indian Drama. He is a realistic playwright who mirrors our society and its callousness in a natural way. Silence! The court is in session remembers Shakespeare's Hamlet as the writer employs a play within a play technique to exhibit the true color of men towards a woman. Silence is used as a tool of suppression and persecution by male dominated society on women by centuries.

KEYWORDS: Silence, Infanticide, mock trial, motherhood, hypocrisy, gender inequality.

The Padma Bhushan awardee Vijay Tendulkar is a well-known name in the Modern Indian Drama. He is a realistic playwright who mirrors our society and its callousness in a natural way. Silence! The court is in session remembers Shakespeare's Hamlet as the writer employs a play within a play technique to exhibit the true color of men towards a woman. Silence is used as a tool of suppression and persecution by male dominated society on women by centuries.

The present paper entitled The Patriarchal Wall of Silence in Vijay Tendulkar's Silenc is the study on silence of women in patriarchal society. Women are sexually oppressed and our Indian culture has enslaved women for ages while men are free to enjoy within and outside the marriage. There is a mock trial which is conspired on Benare to unveil her personal life. The male chauvinists prosecute her by dissecting her private issues and she is badly tortured. Vijay Tendulkar defines Violence, “At a very sensitive level, violence can be described as consciously hurting someone, whether it is physical violence or psychological violence. Violence is something which has to be accepted as fact. It’s no use describing it as good or bad. Projections of it can be good or bad. And violence, when turned into something else, can certainly be defined as vitality, which can be very useful, very constructive. So, it depends on how you utilize it or curb it at times. ‘Benare is found guilty of infanticide and a verdict is sentenced on her. She is a spinster and has consumed the baby without wed lock and her conscious is thwarted for her sin. The man behind this sin is not accused of anything who is equally responsible. Whether it is rape or child by an unmarried woman, only the woman is targeted and tormented and make her feel guilty. Tendulkar questions this thinking in the society, why only a woman alone has to face this sort of assault and succeed in silence.

Benare is a dedicated school teacher. She is very happy that she remains in the midst of children from eight years. She feels children's are better than adults. “They don't scratch you till you bleed, then run away like cowards” (57). Benare loves her job and children and she is good in teaching. Children also adore her and she wants to teach them till her last breath. It's her one bit of slander that the management has taken decision to throw out of the school. In rage she utters, “My life is my own – I haven't sold it to anyone for a job! My will is my own. My management has taken decision to throw out of the school. He says, “It is a sin to be pregnant before marriage. You've plotted against me!” (93). Kashikar Says “Our society should receive the old custom of child marriage. Marry off the girls before puberty. All this promiscuity will come to a full stop.” (98) Mrs. Kashikar says its Benare's earning which has made her like that and the way she moves freely with men that too being unmarried. Even she makes a reference that after a performance they wanted to leave her home but she had taken Damle with her. Whereas Mr. Damle is referred to as a responsible elder person, family man with five children. To emphasize Miss Benare as characterless Mrs.Kashikar says she had tried for much younger guy Balu. Even Ponkshe says Benare had kept the proposal to marry her. Kashikar asks him she was pregnant by one man and wanted to marry another. But they are not seeing her helplessness, straight forward and her honesty to seek help to save her child. But these men make fun of her. She had fallen to his feet but Ponkshe wanted a matured partner for himself. Ironically the truth is that he is not matured enough to understand and broad mind to marry a woman. Whenever Miss Benare wanted to open her mouth to defend herself or to dispose her accusations made on her she is not given any chance and is silenced. Even she can't go outside as the room is locked from outside. She is caught from inside its like a maze. It symbolizes the society and its norms. Everybody feels its her fault not even a single person to show pitty on her. She had even approached Rokde to marry her but he feared about the society which would laugh at him if he married her in this condition. Benare just wanted to save her baby's life so she wanted to get married to any man so that the baby may be accepted in the society. She had even kept Tik-20 in her purse that shows she wanted to kill her life, so as to end this turmoil. Even that is ridiculed by all as she had earlier in her teens already attempted to kill herself. She had loved her maternal uncle. NanasheBShinde the chairman of education society had taken decision to dismiss Benare from the school. He says, “It is a sin to be pregnant before marriage. It would be still more immoral to let such a woman teach, in such a condition! (113).Sukhatma in his prosecution says Benare has made a heinous crime. She is immoral and bringing up the child of an illegal union is even more dreadful. She is seen as a taboo for our culture and society. Sukhatam wants the court to show no mercy on her on the basis of woman. He says “woman bears the grave responsibility of building up the high values of society. Woman is not fit for independence” (115). He seems to be a believer of Mann's principle. Even in this world of
With all the charges on her Benare is asked to speak and the given time is ten seconds. She is having whole lot to say but she is silent, motionless. But she speaks in her mind about her pains. She blames life and it is life that is responsible for everything. She is very upset for her banishment from the school. She had given her whole self to the children. She never taught children despair she taught them hope. She drank the poison and kept them untouched of her private life. The only source of hope and life was her job and she is shattered. She never wanted them to judge her from the private life as she was professionally good as a teacher. She was just 14 when she fell in love with her maternal uncle. It was considered sin by her strict house. But she wanted to get married. He turned his back and she embraced death but in vain. Her body dint die. Second time again she fell in love. It was purely intellectual. She surrendered to him on the altar of worship. She fell for intellectuality but what he wanted was her body not her mind and devotion. She accepts her mistake and says body is a traitor and one needs to accept it as it can't be rejected. Her life was burden to her and she thinks that the trouble, the difficulties, is because of this body only. Her maternal uncle or Damle just wanted to take advantage of her body and were granitic. She was betrayed by her body and now she wants her body for the little life in her. “He must have a mother… a father to call his own - a house - to be looked after - he must have a good name. After her soliloquy Kashikar gives his verdict Benarestillremains motionless. He calls her crime unforgivable and for her irresponsibility she should be chained down. “Marriage is the very foundation of our society's stability. Motherhood must be sacred and pure”(118). Marriage is an institution which is a metaphor for woman's loyalty but not for male counterpart. Praising the school authority for dismissing her from the school, he says, “Neither you nor anyone else should ever do anything like this again. No moments of your sin should remain for future generations. Therefore this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed” (119). Benare cries out” No! No! No! - I won't let you do it - I won't let it happen – I won't let it happen!”(119). Thus the mock trial is over. But it is the true story of her life. Thus unmarried motherhood is seen as obscene and the child brought up from it is rejected from the society.  

The most striking is the silence of the victim. Benare adheres to silence and it indicates her subjugation and helplessness. She is forced to accept her sin and the co-partner in the sin is left free. That's how society is designed in favor of men to control women. Simone De Beauvoir rightly quotes, “Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men, they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth”. The hypocrisy of the society is well narrated through the words of Benare, “Their lips are full of lovely worn-out phrases! And their bellies are full of unsatisfied desires”(117). Benare is educated, frank, self-reliant and free thinking. She is a woman so her independent way of leading life is condemned. Tendulkar is condemning the so called modern society which fancies about everything and in reality suffocates women living. Only Benare is dismissed from her teacher job questioning her morality but Mr. Damle is having illegal relation with a woman though married and still he continues as a professor. Tendulkar voices against gender based exploitation and he feels, “As a social being I am against all exploitation and I passionately feel that all exploitation must end.”Thus protagonist Bendre is succumbed to power and suffocated in the wall of patriarchal silence.

REFERENCES:
1. Beauvoir, Simone De, The Second Sex.trans.H.H.Parsheley (Harmonds Worth; Penguin), P.249