



THE GOVERNANCE OF THE MARGINALIZED IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION

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Abstract: Silence! the court is in session is a translated work of Vijay Tendulkar who is a leading contemporary play wright. It throws lights on the Marathi culture, beliefs and lifestyles. In this play, he has depicted the plight of a young woman, who is betrayed by the male dominated society, which does not like to perceive or receive any social change. It highlights the marginalized state of women.

Key Words: Women ,Poverty, Marginalization

I. INTRODUCTION

Women are cast in roles of wives who need protection, of widows who are rendered asexual, of women who stand in the shadows, who cook and sweep and cater to the male world. The reasons for the marginalization of women are many, such as the role of the family, attitude of society towards marriage and morality. They experience various forms of oppression. They are denied the basic rights to life, equality, dignity and person hood. In fact they are victims of injustice. Women indeed are widely marginalized by severe forms of economic and social injustice. Silence! the court is in session is a translated work of Vijay Tendulkar who is a leading contemporary play wright. It throws lights on the Marathi culture, beliefs and lifestyles. In this play, he has depicted the plight of a young woman, who is betrayed by the male dominated society, which does not like to perceive or receive any social change. It highlights the marginalized state of women. Benare is an educated woman about thirty-four years old. She works as a schoolteacher. She is also associated with an amateur dramatic alliance, whose prime purpose is to educate the public with social and current issues (1). The association chooses to educate people with procedures of a court of law. They arrive on the spot quite early, thus they decide to have a rehearsal of mock court. Benare is reluctant to perform the role of an accused but this reluctance is ignored. Benare is different in the beginning. She is agitated and filled with remorse. Whenever she is uttering a word of protest, she is silenced by the men folk, as it is a game played under the guise of a harmless rehearsal. She faces her accusers silently, finally breaks down, as they rip off mask after mask, leaving her pathetically weakened and mentally naked. In the course of the trial the characters ask questions which are fundamental questions about the individual and society. In this society to be an unwed mother is an offence. They refuse to accept Benare. The poor woman consents to live in a real inferno. The society tries to crush her individuality. She develops tender emotions as a mother and a desire to have a father for her child. She is marginalized since she is not recognized as an individual, an equal and a human being with her own needs and desires. Motherhood which is seen as the final fulfillment of a woman and often craved for by her, becomes a stifling factor in her life. She needs to have a companion. She feels that her deepest self is threatened. The play is, a satire on the conventions and hypocrisy of the middle-class male dominated society which is concerned only (2) with a farcical moral code. It is Benare's fear of such a code that makes her crave for marriage and forces her to beg the inferior men around, one after another, to marry her in order to play the 'role' of a 'father' to her child. Benare's final collapse is unexpected and it leaves the audience with a feeling of pity and horror. Testimony after testimony is heaped upon her to prove that 'she is trying to cover up her sinful dead'. They torment her 'self by flinging dart after dart. She is compelled to listen to every word of accusation, but the truth in their words strikes her with terror and guilt. The curtain of appearance drawn aside to reveal the truth and a verdict is pronounced that she is a sinful canker on the body of society'. The main charge is wholly forgotten during the trial. All the characters try to impose their personal comments and accuse Benare of wrong-doing and immoral acts, in one form or another. The game of mock trial, which starts for entertainment, turns into Benare's tragedy who is totally devastated. She is also stricken with a sense of fear like a trapped animal, and has been dismembered morally and socially. In the words of Arundhati Banerjee, Leela Benare's defence of herself against the onslaughts of the upholders of social norms in a long soliloquy, has become famous in the history of contemporary Marathi theatre. The judgment is absurd. Mr. Kashikar says: "The crimes you have committed are most terrible. There is no forgiveness for them...No memento of your sin should(3)remain for future generations. Therefore this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed." In the character of Leela Benare the subjection of women to all forms of discrimination in every institutional structure, extending from family to state are dealt with. "Subordination of women is a socially, economically and culturally constructed phenomenon (Rehman 119). In simple terms, woman's fundamental right to be her own self has been denied to her. This could perhaps be the worst form of violation of human rights. Society does not accept a single

woman as a healthy, sane and normal person. She is seen as abnormal or deficient and is looked upon with suspicion. Vijay Tendulkar challenges the society questioning how when man & woman are responsible for the child, why is it that woman only pays. Woman's needs, her freedom, her personality, her individuality should be equally valued. Benare is suppressed by the so called male dominating society in spite of having talents and abilities to excel. She needs security, social status, love, affection and recognition. But she patiently endures injustice and silently hears insults. The culture of the society provides the frame work with in which its members operate and the standards to which they confirm. The translation of the work from Marathi has not lost its message which is most effectively brought out. (4)

Vijay Tendulkar thus in *Silence!* the court is in session, has proved that the marginalized women are fit for a much wider range of activities than merely those compatible with the commonly accepted idea of the weaker sex. He emphasizes issues concerning the interest, both in women's individual well-being and the welfare of society. Tendulkar, though not a self -acknowledged feminist, treats his women characters with understanding and compassion, while pitting them against men who are selfish, hypocritical and brutally ambitious.

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