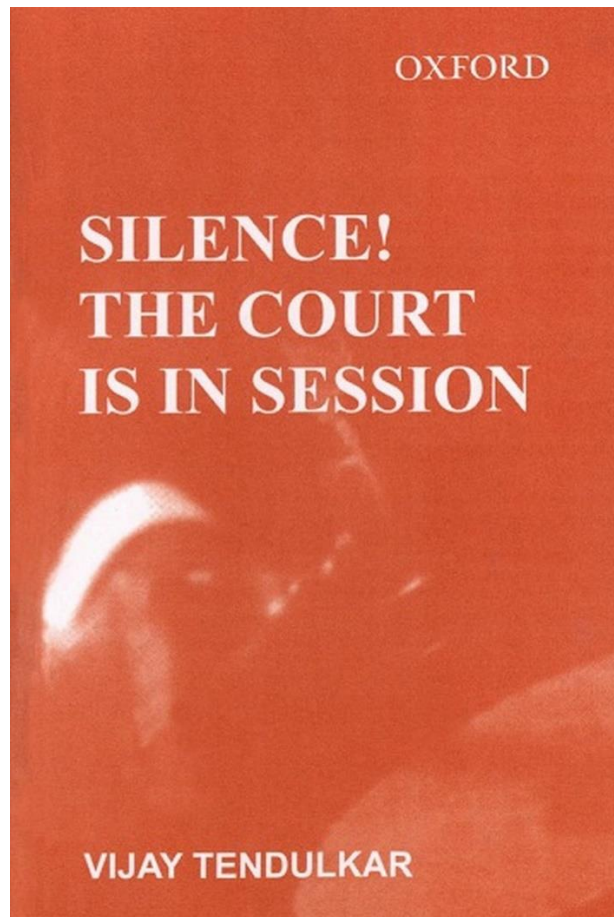


**Exploitation of Women and Patriarchal Domination in
Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session***

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Courtesy: <https://www.amazon.com/Silence-Court-Session-Adarkar-Tendulkar/dp/0195603133>

Abstract

Most of the plays deal with the theme of love, sex and violence. They reveal anger and frustration of the post – 1960 generation in the Indian context. The ideas implicit in the themes are revolutionary. They are opposed to the conventional norms and established values. The emphasis here is on human nature and its complexities. In projecting the revolt of the plays' protagonists against conventionality, Tendulkar displays his love of humanity and his

commitment to human values. The psychological study explores shifts and changes that have taken place in the modes of human thinking, feeling and behaving with regard to Tendulkar,s characters among which we see highly typified as well as individualised men and women.

Keywords: Vijay Tendulkar, *Silence! The Court is in Session*, injustice, womanhood, inequality, sadism, victimization

Vijay Tendulkar

Vijay Tendulkar is a leading contemporary Indian Playwright. His *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* (1967) is a well-known Marathi play. Priya Adarkar translated it as *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1978). He emerged as an artist with national reputation and recognition. In his plays he successfully depicts the social problems. He looks at the problems of society from a new and original angle. Over the past century there has been a great increase in number of women in the labor force. Though there has been a lot of advocacy towards bringing equality. It is still a farfetched idea. Women’s contribution to the present-day business is very significant and rapid increasing. But women still have to face a lot of challenges to acquire status equality. Apart from economic independence work is an essential means of enabling a person to develop a sense of identity and self-esteem.

Silence! The Court is in Session

Silence! The Court is in Session is his best-known play. In this play Tendulkar has depicted the plight of a young educated urban woman in a male dominated society. A traditional male-dominated middle-class society is reluctant to any social change. Benare, the heroine of the play is in search of a happy life after a few frustrations in her life. But society does not allow her to live quietly. Benare is an educated woman of about 34 years. She is a school teacher by profession. She loves life and is full of spirits. She is very proud of her performance as a teacher and feels that her life is her own and no one has got the right to interfere in it. She is a member of an amateur dramatic association which stages plays in different places to create public consciousness on some social or sociological issues. Currently the dramatic trope has taken up the issue of educating the people about procedures of a court of law.

Mock Trial

This play presents the course of a mock trial where Benare, as the accused, is tried for an imaginary crime of infanticide. Though the trial is conducted in a game like and non – serious manner, it exposes the past life of Benare and authenticates the feeling of superiority of men over women in Indian Society. The so-called social workers like Kashikar and his troupe show social concern for social reform. They are known for their double standards attitude. Tendulkar has expressed his attitude towards such people in the society. He attacked ironically and satirically throughout the play.

Hypocritical Male Attitude

In *Silence! The Court is in Session* he directs his criticism against the hypocritical male attitude in Indian society where a woman is quite suppressed and any small attempt by a woman for her freedom is highly deteriorated. Tendulkar in highly artistic manner withdraw from

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making any statement which saves the play from being propaganda. A play, in order to be staged successfully needs to be rehearsed. The main body of play concerns the rehearsal of a drama on the theme of a court trial of an accused on some imaginary charges. Act – I, exhibits that all preparations for such a rehearsal of a mock court trial have been made. Act – I, is an introduction to the main action of the real play which starts in Act – II.

Samant - Benare

The play begins with the arrival of the dramatic troupe in a village to stage a mock trial of a court in order to educate the rural folk about the functioning of a court of law. Since they arrive in the village much before the time of the actual performance they plan to spend the prime period of time in some sort of a game like activity. The rehearsal of the play in the village suggests the main action of the play. A detail analysis of Act – I reveal the entire course of the drama. While engaged in conversation with Samant. Benare tells him about her experiences as a popular teacher in a school. She further narrates how people around here are jealous for which they have instituted an enquiry against her for one bit of slander. This slander relates to her affair with Professor Damle as it has been shown in the course of her trial as the accused.

A Problem Play

Silence! The Court is in Session is a problem play with a difference. In a problem play the protagonist's situation is so presented as to show that it represents a contemporary social or sociological problem. Also, the dramatist uses a character of the play as the spokesman to highlight the problem and its solution. Referring to the writer's attitude about the middle class, Kumud Mehta asserts, in his earlier works he had dwelt on the woes of the middle class with a degree of sympathy, bordering on sentiment.

Tendulkar exposes this condition of women of the middle-class family in the Indian Context. Both Benare and Mrs. Kashikar are presented as women who have fallen victims to male supremacy in Indian society. They both are not free to act independently. Benare's attempt to lead an independent life of her own has been frustrated by the group of men surrounding her during the course of the mock trial. Her freedom has been mercilessly crushed. She argues:

*Don't you think that maturity... comes to a person only with
Experience, and experience comes with age, with a slightly
unusual way of life. (62) (Mehta)*

She gradually becomes serious and depressed because all the male characters try to unravel her past life with a view of humiliating her. Even Mrs. Kashikar joins hands with them to expose her. When she visited Kashikar on his birthday he listens the communication: It is sin to be pregnant before marriage. It would be still more immoral to let such a woman teach, in such a condition:

“There is no alternative. This woman must be dismissed... send
The order for my signature this very day”. (69) (Mehta)

Benare-Damley

It is further revealed that Benare is carrying the child of Damley in her womb. Karnik discloses the fact Benare in her youth, was in love with her maternal uncle and when that affair ended in fiasco, she attempted suicide. Further, it is disclosed in the court that after her pregnancy through Prof. Damle, Benare attempted to get married to anyone to save herself from defamation.

Violence

The violence in the play already raises its hood in this play. In the persecution of Benare, helpless woman, a fierce psychological violence becomes obvious. The characters of Sukhatme, Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar, Ponkshe or even Rokde comes to the front during the process of the trial. In depicting these characters, Tendulkar has explored their psyche to the extent of revealing the hidden sense of failure pervading their lives, namely, the inefficiency of Sukhatme as a lawyer, the childlessness of the Kashikar couple, the non-fulfillment of Ponkshe's dreams to become a scientist, the vain attempts of Karnik to be a successful man. Though he exposes male supremacy, he never becomes vocal about woman's right. This artistic objectivity saves the play from being a mere propaganda play.

Unacknowledged Legislators of the Society

The characters assuming themselves as the unacknowledged legislators of the society attack and torture Leela Benare and they themselves think that it is their duty. The play depicts how the middle-class ideas of morality are responsible for the violence in the play. Prof. Damle exploits Leela Benare's academic interest to enjoy sex with her. Benare innocently becomes victim to him who betrays her. She becomes pregnant and requests Rokde and Ponkshe to marry and save her from ignominy. Benare ridicules their diffidence and hypocrisy. She exposes the hypocrisy of so-called prestigious people and laughs at their flaws. In the mock trial her personal life is exposed by other characters and she is hurt deeply. The real culprit is Prof. Damle but other characters do not find fault with him. Benare loves life and she is utterly desperate with the situation. The play exposes the inhuman violence in its verbal form of the patriarchal society against women.

To Conclude

This play consists of three acts. It has elaborate stage direction, which enables the action of the play become very lively. Playwright, Tendulkar supports feminists, so he highlights women as sufferers of the male hegemony and oppression. Women characters are depicted as helpless victims of the conspiracies originated by men class. Thus, Benare was ill-treated by her friends and male characters.

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