

“Exploring Double Standards and Gender Disparity in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session*”

Chandan

Assistant Professor, Department of English,
Government First Grade College,
Channapatna.

ABSTRACT:

Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a powerful critique of societal double standards, gender disparity, and the unfair treatment of women in Indian society. This article delves into these themes, examining how Tendulkar uses the mock trial in the play to expose the deep-seated prejudices and moral hypocrisies that women face. Through the character of Miss Benare, the play challenges the patriarchal norms and highlights the systemic oppression that continues to marginalize women.

Keywords: Gender disparity, patriarchal, hypocrisies, prejudices, challenges, marginalize.

INTRODUCTION:

Vijay Tendulkar, one of India's most celebrated playwrights, often addressed complex social issues in his works. *Silence! The Court is in Session*, written in 1967, remains a relevant and thought-provoking play that examines the condition of women in Indian society. This research article explores the themes of double standards, gender disparity, and unfair treatment of women as portrayed in the play. It also reflects on how Tendulkar uses the courtroom setting as a microcosm to critique broader societal attitudes towards women.

DOUBLE STANDARDS IN SOCIETY:

The play is a searing commentary on the double standards that prevail in society, particularly concerning women's behaviour and morality. Miss Benare, the protagonist, is a symbol of the independent, self-reliant woman who defies societal norms. However, her independence and personal choices make her a target of the hypocritical moral judgment of the male characters. The mock trial serves as a means to publicly shame and humiliate her for her perceived transgressions, reflecting the societal tendency to hold women to stricter moral standards than men.

Tendulkar's portrayal of the male characters, who are quick to condemn Miss Benare while conveniently ignoring their own moral failings, highlights the inherent double standards in society. The character of Kashikar, who presides over the mock trial with a sense of self-righteousness, represents the patriarchal authority that enforces these double standards. The play criticizes how society often turns a blind eye to the flaws of men while scrutinizing and punishing women for the same or lesser offenses.

GENDER DISPARITY:

Gender disparity is a central theme in **Silence! The Court is in Session**. Tendulkar uses the characters' interactions to expose the unequal treatment of men and women in both personal and professional spheres. Miss Benare's status as an unmarried woman working as a teacher makes her an outlier in a society that expects women to conform to traditional roles of wife and mother. Her ambition and desire to live life on her own terms are viewed with suspicion and disdain by her male counterparts.

The mock trial in the play is not just a reflection of the legal system but also an indictment of the social systems that perpetuate gender inequality. Miss Benare is judged not just for her alleged 'crime' but for her very existence as a woman who dares to challenge societal norms. Her personal life is put on trial, revealing how women's identities and choices are often subjected to public scrutiny and moral policing, whereas men are afforded more freedom and privacy.

UNFAIR TREATMENT OF WOMEN:

The unfair treatment of women is depicted through the character of Miss Benare, who is subjected to psychological and emotional abuse under the guise of a mock trial. The male characters' eagerness to prosecute and vilify her for her relationship with a married man reveals the deep-seated misogyny that governs their actions. Miss Benare's silence during the trial is symbolic of the voicelessness imposed on women by a patriarchal society that denies them agency and autonomy.

Tendulkar also sheds light on the ways in which women internalize and perpetuate their own oppression. The character of Mrs. Kashikar, who is complicit in the mock trial, represents the internalized patriarchy that often pits women against each other. Her willingness to participate in Miss Benare's humiliation highlights the lack of solidarity among women in the face of patriarchal oppression, a theme that resonates deeply in the context of gender dynamics in India.

OTHER RELEVANT THEMES:

Apart from the primary themes of double standards, gender disparity, and unfair treatment of women, the play also touches on issues like societal hypocrisy, the misuse of power, and the dehumanization of individuals through public shaming. Tendulkar's use of the courtroom as a metaphor for society allows him to critique not just the specific actions of the characters but also the broader social and cultural norms that enable such behaviour.

The play also raises questions about the nature of justice and morality. The mock trial, which is supposed to be a harmless game, turns into a tool of oppression, revealing how power dynamics can corrupt even the most seemingly benign institutions. The characters' willingness to participate in the mock trial without questioning its ethical implications speaks to the complicity of society in the perpetuation of injustice.

CONCLUSION

Vijay Tendulkar's **Silence! The Court is in Session** is a powerful exploration of the deep-rooted gender biases and societal double standards that continue to affect women. Through the character of Miss Benare and

the mock trial, Tendulkar critiques the patriarchal structures that enforce these inequalities and highlights the psychological and emotional toll they take on women. The play remains a relevant and poignant commentary on the status of women in society, urging audiences to reflect on the persistent disparities and injustices faced by women.

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