**“Indian Woman: Her status in Society and its reflection in Literature” in Vijay Tendulkar’s Silence! The Court is in Session**

Tendulkar was a famous Indian playwright, movie and television writer, literary essayist, political journalist and social commentator primarily in Marathi.The paper proposes to present the treatment of women and their predefined roles in the society. Depreciation of women as a human being and her deprivation from most of the human rights, related to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual. It also focuses on the problems like exploitation, injustice and inequality suffered by women.

Present Independent India claims to be a country of freedom and equal rights. But women ironically in this free country are still struggling for their freedom and safety of life. Women suffer the orthodox customs and rules decided for them in the male dominated society. No strict laws for safety of women are implemented; they bear harsh customs of society which are different from that of men. Tendulkar shows these unjust patterns towards women through his various plays and one of the most prominent is Silence! The Court is in Session. He very clearly brings out the issues through the various characters and the intelligently crafted story. Major characters in the play are Miss Leela Benare (main protagonist) a spinster, but educated and a working woman. Mrs. Kashikar is another woman who is foil to Miss Benare dependent, uneducated and thus feels jealous of her. Rest characters are Mr. Kashikar a dominating male and husband of Mrs. Kashikar, Sukhatme, Rokde, Karnik etc.

We see in the beginning of the play Mrs. Leela Benare as a bright, bold and confident woman. She very cleverly outwits the men and other characters of the play. It is revealed thatshe is an excellent school teacher who not only enjoys her work but also performs her duties perfectly. Rest characters in the play dislike her due to her extra frank, witty and bold character. Unfortunately Miss Benare was in love with a University Professor Mr. Damle and carried his baby in her womb. This gave other characters a chance to let her down and so they plan to trap her through a mock trial. Miss Benare a lady of cheerful and free spirit is questioned about her sanctity and punished to kill herchild and her job as a teacher is also taken away from her. Mr. Damle on the other hand who had his wife and children, steps back from his responsibilities towards Miss Benare, he is not questioned and left free by the so called justice oriented society. Leela Benare competing for equality with men is alone in the fight as Mrs. Kashikar who is a middle aged, married, house wife does not oppose her insults and considers her husband as caring. Mrs. Kashikar is jealous of Miss. Benare’s freedom and independence. She has orthodox views against Benare. She does not hesitate to say that these young unmarried girls get everything without marrying. She shows her doubt, how can Benare remain unmarried till the age of thirty-four?

Benare here represents all the women in India who are suppressed, oppressed and are marginalized. She breaks down during the mock-trail because she was psychologically harassed.Miss Benare is not a traditional heroine who suffers the injustices by the society. She is a new woman pleading for freedom from the social norms. Silence in the play is a symbol of oppression, a characteristic of the subaltern condition, while speech signifies self-expression and liberation. This Silence refers to the act where Mr. Kashikar who acts as a judge refuses to listen to Miss Benare’s explanation and silences her again and again.Leela Benare refuses to be cowed down by men. The last speech of Ms. Benare was skillfully constructed by Tendulkar. It echoes the irony, sorrow lampoon present in the Indian society. Ms. Benare said;

But I was ignorant instead; I threw myself off a parapet of our house-to embrace death. But I didn’t die. My body didn’t die I felt as its feelings were dead.Vijay Tendulkar presented the court by converting the accusation into the verdict. The mock-trial ends up with an interruption by a visitor reminding them of their being late in the show. This interruption brings them back from illusion to reality. But Benare remains in the same condition engrossed in thought for she is overtaken by the reality implied in the illusion. Her reality is different from others. Parrot in the play is a powerful symbol of illusion of her own self and sparrow represents her reality.

Tendulkar treats his female characters with understanding and compassion. In his feminist research on the effect of development of women, has clearly revealed that in many areas of the country the rights of women are infringed, women are exploited emotionally, socially and physically. Benare is dismissed from the job. She cries in pain but she does not succumb to the social torture and stands defiant till the end. The cynical game is well-rooted in their sick psyche that informs the verdict they pass on her, with the sort of pleasure that can be envy of professional torturers. The verdict is that her baby should be killed because its existence negates the very idea of moral values.The situation becomes complicated when Ponkshe reveals that Benare lives only for the child in her womb and will give birth to it. Now Sukhatme,the lawyer, counsels for the prosecution :The woman......... has made a heinous blot on the sacred brow of motherhood Motherhood without marriage has always been considered a very great sinby our religion and our traditions.

Arundhati Banerjee a critic, maintains that the accusation brought against Benare at the beginning of the trial turns into the verdict in last because contemporary Indian Society, with its roots grounded firmly in reactionary ideas, cannot allow the birth of a child out of wedlock. This very, reversal in the attitude of the authorities expresses the basic hypocrisy and double standards on which our society is founded. In the course of court proceedings, Miss Benare’s private life is exposed and publicly dissected revealing that she is a woman of loose character, Tendulkar displays, the psychological violence that

makes a female individual as helpless as Lachrymose. When Mr. Kashikar, the Judge listens that Benare is a spinster, he very irrationally approves the custom of child Marriage.

It also displays how women desires are repressed under the onslaught of reactionary ideas of the fundamentally orthodox society. It also displays how women are disrupted to do certain things. She cannot talk , walk & live freely. If she does this like Benare and some mishappening occurs, this misfortune will inevitably fall upon her character. It is important that it is also men who ruin the society but accused will remain women like Miss Leela Benare.Thus we see how the fake morals of society of which we just make a show are imposed only upon women and it is their responsibility to bear and follow it. Men however are free even as culprits. Indian Society, despite being educated suffers due to the framed outlook of people which consists only of orthodox views and practices.