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A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS ON VIJAY TENDULKAR'S SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION

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ABSTRACT:

Indian writing in English is a form of writing that help the thinkers, critics, and writers to voice out their thoughts, emotions in the form of essay, poetry, short stories, drama, fiction and non-fiction works. Drama plays an important role in highlighting the stark realities of the Indian society. A prominent Marathi dramatist Vijay Tendulkar, through his writings addressed various social issues: gender hegemony, patriarchy, power dynamics, societal hypocrisy, violence, man-women relationships etc. Silence! The Court is in Session is a drama written by Vijay Tendulkar in 1963. It talks about social norms and individual desire, gender inequality, morality, and victimized status of the woman. It also reflects the harsh realities of Indian patriarchal society, hypocrisy, and mental violence in the name of reforming the society. In the mock trial, the actors in the play tormented the psyche of the protagonist. This paper will analyze the psychological turmoil of Miss Leela Benare after the attack in the mock trial from the lens of Sigmund Freud's theory of repression. It will also analyze the social hypocrisy played by a group of people in Leela Banera's life; that lack power imbalance in both the victim and the perpetrator.

Keywords: gender roles, psychological impact, mock trial, repression

INTRODUCTION:

Vijay Tendulkar is widely known Marathi Playwright. His plays are the reflection of the Indian society. The Play Silence! The Court Is in Session, projects middle class hypocrisy, social injustice, gender politics, etc. This play revolves around the Protagonist Leela Benare accusing her of the crime she has committed with Prof. Damle. She was targeted by her fellow members as the main culprit of the crime i.e. she was pregnant before marriage. While accusing, they didn't blame on Prof. Damle. This play highlights that woman's body is controlled and is voiceless in the society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Dr. Indravadan G. Purohit (2014) in the article "Silence! The Court Is in the session! By Vijay Tendulkar-A Study on the Defeat of women in Male dominated society", argues that from the title itself make an influential directed with a strict patriarchal bias where women are subjugated in the hands of male dominated society. It also reflects the fragmented court procedures in the courtroom. The ridiculous judgement by the judge in the courtroom is presented as something absurd. The victim Leela Benare, who is challenging the patriarchal code and conduct was harassed by her own colleagues signify the harsh realities of today's society. The themes of gender discrimination, Power politics, moral hypocrisy, and maltreatment are projected in this play.

Tanmoy kundu (2013) in the article "Exploitation of Women in Vijay Tendulkar's Plays Silence! The Court is in Session and Kamala" Silence! The Court is in Session presents a play within a play where the protagonist Leela Benare, as the victim is accused for a crime of infanticide that is against the patriarchal set up of the Indian society. The trial that was conducted was a mock trial but the other characters in the play exposes the past life of Leela Benare and it hit her of the superiority of men over women in Indian society. The harsh treatment meted out to the educated women is no less than a slave. In the name of social reform, the co-workers of Leela Benare were attacking the protagonist, ironically and satirically. The pathetic condition of the women is clearly projected out in an artistic manner.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts close textual analysis. The primary source is Tendulkar's Silence! The Court is in Session. The play is interpreted from the lens of Sigmund Freud's idea of id, ego and super ego as well as from the perspective of theory of repression to understand the turmoil of the protagonist, Leela Benare.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

Miss Leela Benare, a school teacher by profession was accused in the mock trial. The mock trial becomes a real questioning. In the mock trial, the other actors accused Leela Benare by using her personal affairs. She was projected as sinner. The real happening of the Indian society is reflected in this play. In the name of social reform, her character was dissected by the members of the society. Sukhatme, prosecuted her in the mock trial session:

Milord, the nature of the charge against the accused, Miss Leela Benare, is truly dreadful... The woman who is an accused has made a heinous blot on the sacred brow of motherhood... Her conduct has blackened all social and moral values. The accused is public enemy number one... Therefore, I say the court must take a very stern, inexorable view... The charge against the accused is one of infanticide. (Tendulkar 114)

It clearly shows that morality becomes a weapon only to determine the status of women in the society. Leela Benare becomes a victim even if she is an independent and educated woman. She is presented in the play as an outspoken character but this was all crushed down by the other characters. She was labeled as an independent individual who defies the norms of the society. She was in love with a married man and in result she got pregnant. She was insulted and abused for that. Her body becomes an insulting space for the freedom and love she craved for. But in return she realizes the wants of the opposite gender, “He was a man. For whom everything was of the body, for the body!” (Tendulkar 118). The body she mentions is her own body that she once burnt when she was fourteen too. This body gave her a moment of beautiful, blissful, and near to heaven!

The moral judgment that society has done to her reciprocates in a way that it damages her emotionally and psychologically. She sarcastically remarks the society as cultured men of the 21st Century. The crime that she committed in her fourteen is a serious issue in the society according to the cultured society. She fell in love with her mother’s brother. In her prime time, her uncle gave a meaning to her life. Society designates her as a culprit because he is her uncle. Her uncle praises her bloom every day. She wants to live her life like everybody but her mother pinned her down since it is not allowed in the society. At this juncture, she found her man running away from her instead of supporting. The same thing happened when she was grown up, with professor Damle.

She was in the witness box, to explain the victim’s story in the mock trial. She remains silent inside the witness box. So, Kashikar gives judgement:

The crimes you have committed are most terrible. There is no forgiveness for them. Your sin must be expiated. Irresponsibility must be chained down. Social customs, after all, are of supreme importance. Marriage is the very foundation of our society’s stability. Motherhood must be sacred and pure. This court takes a serious view of your attempt to dynamite all this. It is the firm opinion of this court that your behaviour puts you beyond mercy. And, what is more, the arrogance with which you conducted yourself in society, having done all these things, that arrogance is the most unforgivable thing of all. Criminals and sinners should know their place. You have conducted yourself above your station. The court expresses its indignation at your presumptuousness. Moreover, the future of posterity was entrusted to you. This is a very dreadful thing. The morality which you have shown through your conduct was the morality you were planning to impart to the youth of tomorrow. This court has not an iota of doubt about it. Hence not only today’s, but tomorrow’s society would have been endangered by your misconduct. It must be said that the school officials have done a work of merit in deciding to remove you from your job. By the grace of God, it has all been stopped in time. Neither you nor anyone else should ever do anything like this again. No memento 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. (118-119)

The society has already given judgments based on the man-made norms. She was again reminded that morality is important so that the younger generation should not repeat this misconduct. To preserve the sanctity, she was given instructions to abort the fetus. They become court, jury and witness to destroy people.

She becomes silent and in the ACT III of the Play. The monologue explains the hidden woes and anger:

BENARE. Yes, I have a lot to say. [Stretches to loosen her arms.] For so many years, I haven't said a word. Chances came, and chances went. Storms raged one after another about my throat. And there was a wail like death in my heart. But each time I shut my lips tight. I thought, no one will understand. No one can understand! When great waves of words came and beat against my lips, how stupid everyone around me, how childish, how silly they all seemed. Even the man I call my own. I thought, I should just laugh and laugh till I burst. At all of them that's all—just laugh and laugh! And I used to cry my guts out. I used to wish my heart would break! My life was a burden to me. [Heaving a great sigh] But when you can't lose it, you realize the value of it. (Tendulkar 116)

She wants to share whatever she has gone through but there is no one whom she can trust even when many people are around. She tried to commit suicide but people again mistreated for that. The psychological conflict that Benare went through can be analyzed from Freud's model of psyche-id, ego and super ego. Her primal urge to express the emotions and longing for freedom from the restrictions of the society made her to fall in the category of Freud's id. "When great waves of words came and beat against my lips, how stupid everyone around me, how childish, how silly they all seemed." (ibid). She was in the crossroad of what she wants and what society demands. Here, the ego is the balance of Professor Damle's love, her teaching profession and respect from the society. Here the id and ego clashes. The external world made her to shut her lips since Indian society has strict patriarchal code and conduct. The super ego represented by the society has something for her. It is totally different from what she wants. Even if the super-ego crashes her into pieces, her ego chooses her to accept repression and function. That's why she was in the group and included in the mock trial. Her ego is controlling her id even if the superego sets boundary: "My private life is my own business, I'll decide what to do with myself; everyone should be able to! That can't be anyone else's business; understand? Everyone has a bent, a manner, an aim in life. What's anyone else to do with these?" (Tendulkar 117).

She was fixed by the society for involving in affairs with her uncle and with Prof. Damle whom she trusted. She had gone through primal repression and repression proper. According to Freud,

We have reason to assume that there is a primal repression, a first phase of repression, which consists in the psychical (ideational) representative of the instinct being denied entrance into the conscious. With this a fixation is established; the representative in question persists unaltered from then onwards and the instinct remains attached to it. This is due to the properties of unconscious processes. (Freud 525)

Here, the traumatic phase of Leela Benare is pushed into the unconscious. It is stuck and it occupied a place inside. It remained fix. The incident that had happened when she was fourteen was already occupied inside her. Later, when a slightly similar incident occurs, the wound appears again in the conscious level. It becomes a chain reaction and connected the old trauma and the new. Due to societal pressure both were repressed and buried.

The second stage of repression, repression proper, affects mental derivatives of the repressed representative, or such trains of thought as, originating elsewhere, have come into associative connection with it. On account of this association, these ideas experience the same fate as what was primally repressed. Repression proper, therefore, is actually an after-pressure. (525)

Applying Freud's concept of repression to Benare, it reflects the fabric of her mental collapse. Her primal repression happened at fourteen with her uncle, when the love for her uncle is against by her mother and the tradition of the society, her conscious becomes a fixation in the unconscious. It creates a niche that attracts all the subsequent consequences and emotions are repressed. Later, when she becomes mature, her affair with Damle, her pregnancy, and the trial reached her in repression proper i.e. "after-pressure". The Primal repression and repression proper helped her not to speak and remained silent. Her ego that tries to speak truth is fighting inside. It becomes a mediator of her instinct and societal judgement. At the end, her ego is surrendered and led her id go buried so that super ego will stop commenting.

CONCLUSION: Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* is not only a play about mock trial but the reality of the society. It dissects the psychological trauma of an individual by a fellow individual in the name of progress and sanctity. Through the character of the protagonist and other male members who are involved in the mock trial, it is understood that culture, traditions, customs, and moral hypocrisy act as a tool to oppress women and labeled them. The courtroom becomes a metaphor for the society who act and do moral policing. She was pushed away by the society and forcefully silenced her for the crime she committed. She becomes submissive and assumed that the society win because she cannot defend.

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