

# *BA ENGLISH II SEMESTER*

## *INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH-I UNIT II*


*Spoorthi C S, Asst Professor, UG Dept of English, JSSCACS, Mysuru-25*

*SILENCE!  
THE COURT  
IS IN  
SESSION*

*Play by Vijay Tendulkar*

*Vijay  
Tendulkar  
(1928-2008)*

---

- Born in lower middle class Brahmin family
  - Father a Head Clerk in Orient Longman Publishers
  - Vijay a sick child with persistent cough and asthmatic wheezing
  - Parents were overprotective
  - Favorite child in the family
  - Dhondopant his father: an enthusiastic writer, director and actor of Marathi plays
  - His father took Vijay to theatres
  - Theatre was a magic for Vijay
- 

- His father took him to book shops on Sundays
  - Vijay lose himself among the books
  - As a student spent most of his time in libraries
  - Influenced by Dinkar Mokashi and Vishnu Bokil
  - First play Grihasth (1955) in his early twenties (hypocrisy of wealthy exposed)
  - Original script writer for Shyam Bengal, Govind Nihalani and Jabbar Patel
  - An Island Called Man (1958), Vultures (1972), Kanydaan (1982), A Friend's Story (1982)
  - Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Padma Bhushan, Katha Chudamani Literary Prize
-

# *Silence! The Court is in Session (1971)*

- Recognized as Play of the year 1971
- Source: real life incident (Vile Parle)
- Originally written in Marathi and translated to English by Priya Adarkar
- The title: common register in court
- Absolute authority to pronounce judgment
- Powerful comment on a society with a heavy patriarchal bias
- Justice is an instrument of oppression of women and vulnerable sections of society
- Justice become the face of a very repressive and dehumanized system
- Orthodox society Disillusionment in search for individuality by a woman
- The concept of modern woman v/s traditional woman
- Middle class mentality and its pettiness
- The degeneration of dramatic activity (bantering, hostility among each other)

# *Characters of the play*

- Samant: local Yokel
  - Miss Leela Benare: spinster school teacher in her thirties (34) ‘a living woman’
  - Mr Kashikar: a pompous social worker, Mr. Prime Objective
  - Mrs Kashikar: typical middle class woman
  - Balu Rokde: adopted son, ‘Mock Law Court’s factotum’
  - Sukathme: a briefless lawyer
  - Ponkshe: clerk, ‘scientist’ (failed twice Inter Science Exams)
  - Karnik: a part time actor
  - Prof Damle and Rawte do not turn up
  - Rawte was replaced by Samant
-

# *Plot: Exposition*

- Leela Benare: First to arrive at the venue of the performance
  - Leela was escorted by Samant
  - She is full of life and an efficient teacher
  - Light-hearted flirtation with Samant
  - Few members of the troupe arrived except Professor Damle and Rawte
  - Plenty of time at their disposal
  - They have practiced it several times earlier
  - In order to pass time they decided to play game
  - Stage a Mock Trial to familiarize the naïve Samant with the intricacies of court procedure
-


- Leela Benare goes inside to wash her face
  - Others decided to accuse in the mock trial
  - Mock trial itself turned into a play within the play
  - When Benare returns, the stage is set for her mock trial
  - Mock trial on a Social significance, infanticide
  - Mr Kashikar is to be the judge
  - Sukhatme is counsel for the prosecution and defense
  - Ponkshe, Karnik, Balu Rokde Mrs Kashikar and Samant to be the witnesses
  - Relationship of Mr and Mrs Kashikar (exchange of gifts yet quarrel over trivial matters)
-



# *Middle: Trial*


- Kashikar and Sukhatme addressed the accused as ‘Prisoner Miss Benare’
  - She is charged under section 302 for killing a new born child
  - IPC 302: Punishment for murder (Whoever commits murder shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.
  - Everyone tries to expose Benare’s personal life as the Trial proceeds
  - Benare wants the charge to be changed something like snatching public property
-

# *Ending*


- Defense of Benare
  - End of the mock Trial
  - Darkness everywhere lights on Benare with background song
- 
- 

# *Symbolism*

---


- The door latch hurts her finger: tormenters persecute her/ no escape
  - Professor Damle: An evasive lover (double standards of typical middle class man)
  - Sparrow and Parrot: The sparrow symbolizes vigilance, joy, creativity and wisdom. Sparrows are small in size but extremely protective, especially as a clan. Sparrows are constantly busy building nests, foraging for food and protecting their young, and they serve as a reminder that busy hands and minds promote a happy and full life.
  - Parrot is truth telling bird, powerful reflection of self
- 

# *Themes*

- Performance and self expression
  - Women's roles in society
  - Middle class status, tradition and propriety
  - Guilt
  - innocence
- 
- 

# *Polemical Issues in Silence! the Court is in Session*

---

- Pregnant out of wedlock
  - Infanticide
  - Gender discrimination
  - Cruelty in Middle class (social stability)
  - Moral conduct of school authorities (moral sanctity)
  - Character Assassination
  - Moral turpitude/evil quality
  - Patriarchal bias
  - Justice: an instrument of suppression (legal integrity)
  - Carpe diem: the enjoyment of the pleasures of the moment without concern for the future
- 

*Thank you*

