

witnesses, a judge, his wife, an advocate who plays a dual role as the counsel for the defence and the crown, a servant, and the accused herself. The language of the play is very supple and the style very impressive. But for a few soliloquies, dialogues are very engaging and pointed enough to suit the atmosphere of the play. There is plenty of humour, banter, jibes and counter jibes, satire and irony. The mock-trial of Benare, which is carried through a light-hearted atmosphere in the beginning slowly becomes surcharged with cynicism, pettiness and sadism by exposing the private life of the accused and pinning her down in the name of social justice and moral code. She is first accused of infanticide by the court but the very same court sentences her to destroy the child in her womb, as she was unwed begot it out of illicit love. Thus the play exposes the social hypocrisy and its dubious double standards, which offer no protection to women. While Benare is punished for bearing an illegitimate child out of wedlock, Prof. Damle, a married man with family who is responsible for Benare becoming pregnant is left untouched! The play is well structured and the acts lead us from one to the other naturally. There is sudden shift in mood and tempo and like Benare; we are also suddenly taken unawares. The play, no doubt, is a feather to the cap of Tendulkar.

Q. 3. Discuss Vijay Tendulkar's art of characterization with special reference to his play, *Silence! The Court is in Session*.

Ans. Characters delineated against the backdrop of society

Tendulkar is a past master in the art of characterization. Most of his works have a direct, one-to-one relationship with reality. They focus on the different aspects of the human character. They project the complexity of human relationship. As pointed out by Arundhati Banerjee that most of his plays deal with the individual placed against the backdrop of society and explore the tensions between the two. In all of them, women play significant or key roles in the plot. All the works contain a latent critique of modern Indian society, mostly middle class and lower middle class, though from different angles. Most of them follow the naturalist model of playwriting popularized by Ibsen.

Life like characters : characters from day-to-day life

Tendulkar's characters are drawn from our day-to-day life. The characters in *Kamala*, *Sakharam Binder*, *The Vultures*, *Encounters in Umbugland* and *Silence! The Court is in Session* are all drawn from real life situations and as such they belong to our society and our surroundings. Their problems, feelings, approaches and thoughts are similar to that of ours. In the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session*; the central character Miss Leela Benare is an ordinary school teacher. All the other characters—Ponkshe, Karnik, Balu Rokde, Mr. Kashikar, Mrs. Kashikar, Sukhatme,

Savant and the absent character Prof. Damle—belong to an amateur dramatic troupe, 'The Sonar Moti Tenement Progressive Association' from Bombay. They plan a mock-trial just to kill time. Miss Benare is declared the accused and the trial is mounted to punish her. Tendulkar has very skillfully and intelligently delineated the characters of various actors in the drama.

Unique presentation of Miss Benare

Miss Leela Benare, the central figure is the heroine of the play. She is a teacher by profession and an actress by choice. She along with her co-actors reaches a village hall to stage a play against President Johnson for producing atomic weapons. Instead of doing the rehearsal of the play, they decide to stage a mock-trial. Benare is taken unawares and is declared accused under Section 302 of Indian Penal Code. The trial begins and every aspect of Benare's personal life is laid bare. The fact that she is a good teacher and devoted to her job is not accounted for. She is victimized because she is different from others and because she refuses to conform to set norms of the society. She becomes the target of criticism of her teammates because she has developed illicit intimacy with Prof. Damle, a married man with five children. She is forthright, bold and rebellious.

Exposure of Hypocrisy and Double standards through Miss Benare

As Benare possesses a natural lust for life and a spontaneous vitality, she ignores social norms and dictates. Being different from the others, she is easily isolated and made the victim of a cruel game, cunningly maneuvered by her fellow actors. During the so-called 'game', which is meaningfully garbed in the form of a mock-trial, Miss Benare's private life is exposed and publicly dissected, exposing her illicit love affair with Professor Damle, a married man with a family resulting in her pregnancy. Professor Damle is significantly absent at the trial. It denotes his total disowning of responsibility, either social or moral, for the whole situation into which he has driven Miss Benare. During the trial, he is summoned merely as a witness while Benare remains the prime accused as the unwed mother of his illegitimate child. Strangely enough, the accusation of infanticide brought against her at the beginning of the trial, turns into verdict at the end, mainly because contemporary insular Indian society cannot allow the birth of a child out of wedlock. This very reversal of the 'authorities' exposes the basic hypocrisy and double standards on which our society is established.

Ironical presentation of Sukhatme

The other character, which has been depicted most vividly, is that of Sukhatme. He is an advocate by profession. Benare presents an ironical

picture of Sukhatme as a great authority on law who is without a brief idling his time by driving flies with legal precedents at the bar-chamber and killing houseflies in his own tenement. She also tells Ponshe that though Sukhatme is a good man, not even a desperate client will go to him for fear of getting a jail term for certain. This is because, according to Benare, Sukhatme grows dumb before the judge. But in the mock-trial of Miss Benare, Sukhatme comes out with flying colours. He plays a dual role—the role of the counsel for prosecution and that of the defence counsel as Prof. Damle who does the latter role is absent that day. Contrary to the picture presented by Miss Benare about him, he waxes eloquence before the judge and examines the witnesses for the prosecution one by one and establishes the case for the prosecution that Miss Benare is guilty of infanticide and unwed motherhood. He expatiates on the virtue of motherhood and how Miss Benare has blighted it by her illegal motherhood. He very ably differentiates the roles of the prosecutor and the defence counsel by his totally different postures, gestures and mannerisms. On seeing him performing the dual roles with remarkable aplomb, we share the views of Karnik and Ponshe how such a man with so much of skill as Ponshe is a failure as a lawyer in real life.

Kashikar : The conscience keeper of the society

The next important character in the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* is Mr. Kashikar. He plays the role of a judge in the mock-trial. He is a social worker and his prime objective is the upliftment of the masses. Benare ironically calls him 'Mr. Prime Objective'. He is a man of good social and legal understanding. Tendulkar projects Kashikar as the conscience keeper of the society. He is quite good at Sanskrit and quotes justifying his lofty sentiments befitting his dignity as a judge. But his mannerisms such as picking his ear of and on during the trial make him look somewhat ludicrous. Added to this, he lets everyone in the court including him chew *pan* and even grants an adjournment of ten seconds for spitting it out as demanded by the prosecutor. By his frequent tiffs with his wife Mrs. Kashikar and pulling her up every now and then he drags his drawing-room to the court. But in pronouncing his sentence on Miss Benare, he becomes the veritable champion of social traditions and moral standards and sentences that she shall live but the child in her womb begotten out of illicit amour will be made to die. As a judge of the mock-trial, he combines frivolity with seriousness in right proportion and provides excellent fare to the audience.

Significant Roles of Minor characters

Tendulkar assigns other characters like Mrs. Kashikar, Ponshe, Karnik, Rokde and Samant minor though significant roles in the play,

Silence! The Court is in Session. Tendulkar depicts Mrs. Kashikar as a foil to Miss Benare. She represents the traditional Indian housewife existing under the pleasure of her husband. She is jealous of Miss Benare for her economic independence and social recognition in view of her education and career. Mrs. Kashikar is married but without a child. Miss Benare is unmarried but pregnant. Mrs. Kashikar has the protection of her husband. But her lover, Prof. Damle, jilts Miss Benare. So she joins hands with Ponshe, Karnik, Rokde and Samant in calling the dog mad and killing it by exposing the personal love affair of Miss Benare with Damle leading to her pregnancy. Ponshe breaks the promise he has made to Benare by disclosing in the court the name of the person who is responsible for her pregnancy. Karnik exposes the broken love affair of Miss Benare to her maternal uncle driving her to make an unsuccessful bid at suicide. Rokde for his part tells the court that Miss Benare tried to seduce him into marrying her. Samant unknowingly harms Miss Benare by disclosing her secret love affair with Prof. Damle. Tendulkar gives top priority to his character delineation. He develops his characters very meticulously through his dialogue, through the interaction of the characters with one another and also through his well-conceived stage directions. He does not even fail to record the mannerisms of his characters so very realistically that they all appear to have stepped out the stage of life into the stage of the play.

Q. 4. Attempt an essay on Tendulkar's delineation of women in his play, *Silence! The Court is in Session*.

Or

What picture of women does Tendulkar present in his play, *Silence! The Court is in Session*?