CHAPTER FOUR

Politeness Principle

4.0 Preliminaries

A linguistic interaction is necessarily a social interaction. The last two chapters dealt with the major functions of language being the informative, expressive and directive functions. This chapter deals with the social or "phatic" functions in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Politeness principles are those which control the ways we should use language in order to maintain and consolidate our social relations. The emphasis on the politeness principle is to "reduce friction in personal interaction" (Lakoff 1984:64; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983). Utilizing literary pragmatics as a tool of analysis, this study focuses on politeness features in the plays under discussion.

This chapter has three parts. The first part focuses on the politeness strategies like positive politeness strategies. The second part is on negative politeness strategies. Examples of both positive and negative politeness strategies used by the characters of the plays, in their conversations are brought into focus. Instances of the use of aggravating language that threaten the face of the conversationalists are being emphasized in the third part, which brings out the degree of politeness used by the playwrights in their respective plays. Due to the vastness of the

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subject of politeness phenomenon, only a few strategies in each section have been taken into account.

4.1 An Overview

Human beings are self-centered by nature. We all like compliments, congratulations, agreements, condolences etc. Every person has a negative and a positive face. The face of a person here means public self-image. It refers to that emotional and social sense of self that a person expects everyone to recognize. Under normal circumstances, people would like their personal images to be appreciated and not criticized. Our verbal interactions, devoid of politeness, would result in disharmony and cause unpleasantness in human relationships, which would effect the verbal interactions between people. Hence politeness is a main feature, where conversations are concerned.

“Politeness then is not a characteristic inherent to the action itself but is constituted by an interactional relationship, a relationship based upon a standard shared, developed and reproduced by individuals within a social group” [Reiter 2000:76]. Politeness becomes an inevitable strategy in communication. It is a culture specific and context-bound phenomenon. And also, while engaging in conversation with somebody, several factors are taken into account like sociological and interpersonal factors such as status, inferiority- superiority, formality or informality of relation, age group etc. It relates to how language expresses social distance between the speakers in their different role relationships. It also deals with face-work,
reflecting how people in different speech communities attempt to establish, maintain and save face during conversations. Languages differ in how they express politeness. Scholars have termed politeness as being a universal phenomenon. But it does have many shades to it. Richard J Watts (2003:15) brings about the different perceptions of politeness phenomena in the Greek culture and the British culture. For instance Greek informants stress the expression of concern and consideration for the addressee as the fundamental characteristic of politeness. Their perception of politeness stresses the expression of intimacy and the display of warmth and friendliness. English conceptualizations of politeness tend to be broader than Greek. Consideration towards others is stressed, but formality, a discrete maintenance of distance, the wish not to impose upon addressee and expressions of altruism, generosity, morality and self-abnegation are more important for English people. In the same manner, Indians have their own perceptions of politeness. Politeness markers also differ in formal as opposed to colloquial speech. For example in India, one can come across many cultures where, politeness markers differ from one state to the other.

The concept of politeness strategies was highlighted by Brown and Levinson (1987). Their study distinguishes between positive politeness strategies (those who show the closeness, intimacy, and rapport between speaker and hearer) and negative politeness strategies (those that indicate the social distance between the speaker and the hearer). As stated earlier in the introductory chapter, Brown and Levinson base their rationalism
on Erving Goffman’s (1959) notion of ‘face’. They propose Grice-like principles of politeness that are rationally motivated by the desire to preserve ‘face’. Face can be defined as the ‘public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself [Brown and Levinson, 1987:16]. It consists of two dimensions: ‘positive face’ and ‘negative face’. The former is linked to be appreciated and win approval. Negative face is concerned with freedom of action and freedom from imposition. And acts that threaten the interlocutor’s positive face as mentioned by Brown and Levinson are: criticism, disagreement, irreverence, bringing of bad news, raising of divisive topics etc., and those that threaten the negative face are orders, requests, advice, threats, warnings, which are a part of aggravating language. Politeness strategies help in avoiding a threat to the negative as well as the positive face of the addressee.

Although the politeness strategies have been applied to real life conversations, scholars have discussed about the possibilities of applying these strategies to literary works. The linguistic behavior can be thoroughly understood through the dialogic discourse employed in plays, short stories, and novels. The study is concerned with how some characters communicate most effectively and harmoniously, using some of the positive and negative politeness strategies to save face. As the present study is an analysis of two Indian plays, the context in which the characters are presented and the language they speak is drawn from an Indian background. The following paragraphs deal with
the politeness strategies that the characters use to fulfill their intentions.

This analysis is used to reflect the characters’ belief systems and social structures in Nagamandala and Silence! The Court is in Session. It is based on certain strategies of politeness, positive and negative, as well as the aggravating language employed by the characters, in the plays. The study considers a number of socio-cultural factors that might affect politeness use as a whole with reference to status, power, role, distance, etc.

It is unheard of human beings to be polite in all situations, and so they make use of aggravating language in their relationships. This analysis also focuses on that aspect of impoliteness.

4.2 Positive Politeness Strategies

As Lakoff (1973) has stated, there are three broad principles of politeness. They are:

1) Don’t impose
2) Make the addressee feel comfortable and
3) Give options.

Positive politeness emphasizes more on the second principle of making the addressee feel comfortable. It is divided into three main strategies

1) Claim common ground
2) Convey that speaker and hearer are cooperators
3) Fulfill hearer’s wants

These strategies are further divided into number of categories, but due to its vastness, the study is limited to only some of them. Complimenting, congratulating, expressing concern for the other person, etc., would belong to the first category. Reciprocating, avoiding disagreements, being optimistic, promising etc., would convey that the speaker and the hearer are cooperators. And by offering sympathy, gifts, understanding, cooperation, the hearer’s wants are being fulfilled.

4.2.1 Complimenting, Congratulating, Expressing concern For the Addressee

This type of strategy is mostly common in the plays that are mentioned for study. Characters save the ‘face’ of the each other, thereby creating solidarity and assurance for each other. In Nagamandala, Kurudava compliments Rani for her beauty, which makes her feel loved and wanted.

Kurudava: “Ayyo! How beautiful you are! Ears like hibiscus. Skin like young mango leaves. Lips like rolls of silk. How can that Appanna gallivant leaving such loveliness wasting away at home? [Act Two: 11].

Kurudava’s words bring Rani closer to her. By exclaiming about her beauty, the older woman tries to get closer to her. Compliments perform several functions in interpersonal communication. The most important function of compliments is to increase the solidarity between the complimentee and the complimentor. Kurudava implements the same strategy. She
wants to know about Appanna’s and Rani’s married life. She knows that this intention can be achieved by talking to Rani. Hence she uses compliments as a lubricant between herself and Rani. She claims common ground with Rani, by means of compliments. By praising her, Kurudava wants to assure that she cares for Rani.

Naga expresses concern for the miserable condition of Rani. He has seen Appanna, abusing her, and he is worried about her. In the following passage, Naga persuades her to sleep.

Naga: “Come. You slept like a child in my arms last night. You must be sleepy now. Come. Go to sleep” [Act Two: 23].

In these words, one can see that Naga gives importance to the other than the self. He is terribly bruised, after the encounter with the dog. His love for Rani makes him disregard everything else, including his wounds. His words of concern as illustrated above gives comfort to Rani. By showing his concern for her, he knows that Rani will love him as he loves her.

_In Silence! The Court is in Session_, the characters also use positive politeness strategies to make known their consideration for others. In the initial stage of the play, Benare compliments Samant for no reason. Being acquaintances, the need for complimenting is not required. Inspite of this, Benare expresses her admiration for Samant. Her intention is later revealed in the course of the play.

Sukhatme: “... Look here, Benare, What do you think of this
gentleman as the fourth witness?

Benare: This gentleman? Not bad- I think he’s lovely!” [Act One: 18].

Benare’s appreciation is expressed indirectly to Samant. When Sukhatme asks Benare’s opinion about Samant, she responds in a dramatic manner. This strategy is quite effective, as acknowledging one’s fondness for the other, amidst a crowd, makes the compliment appear as sincere and intense. Her approach towards Samant is intentional. She wants to become more intimate with Samant, so that he would fall in love with her. In this instance, Benare is quite explicit about her emotions and feelings regarding Samant. This utterance makes Samant feel appreciated and loved, thereby strengthening the relationship between the two of them.

4.2.2 Reciprocating, Avoiding disagreement, Promising, Being Optimistic...

Levinson and Brown (1987) list certain safe topics which are indicative of the speakers interest in maintaining a healthy relationship with the addressee- topics like weather, beauty of gardens, in-competence of bureaucracies, illness etc. This type of conversation is a part of reciprocating to the other person’s query etc. To disagree with the other person’s judgement is to offend the standards of politeness. ‘Politeness is reciprocal’ (Thorat 2000:158).
The flames in the Prologue of Karnad's play *Nagamandala*, converse with each other in the same manner. Their topic of conversation when they meet every night at the temple is about the trivialities of their households.

Flame 1: “That master of our house, you know what a skinflint he is! He is convinced his wife has a hole in her palm, so he buys all the groceries himself. This evening, before the dark was even an hour old, they ran out of kusbi oil. The tin of peanut oil didn't go far. The bowl of castor oil was empty anyway. So they had to retire to bed early and I was permitted to come here”[Prologue: 2].

The initiative taken by Flame One to begin a conversation is successful when all the other flames, describe similar circumstances in their respective houses. Reciprocating to each other is a positive politeness strategy that helps to attain solidarity which is essential for effective communication.

Flame 4: “My master had an old, ailing mother. Her stomach was bloated; her back covered with bed sores. The house stank cough and phlegm, pus and urine. No one got a wink of sleep at night. Naturally, I stayed back too. The old lady died this morning, leaving behind my master and his young wife, young and juicy as a tender cucumber. I was chased out fast. (Giggles) [Prologue: 3].

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The conversation between the flames in the temple is also an example of harmless gossiping. As human beings talk about general issues like the weather, illness etc, the flames who have been attributed human characteristics by the playwright, exchange news amongst themselves.

The same kind of banter takes place between Benare and Samant in *Silence! The Court is in Session*. Both of them have just entered the performance hall, and talk about insignificant matters like hypnotism, magic shows. When Samant, talks about the performances of magic shows in the same hall, Benare encourages him to talk about it, by adding her knowledge to it.

Samant:... Do you know- there were magic shows here some time ago? Sleight of hand, hypnotism and all that...

Benare: Did you see them?
Samant: What do you think! I’m here for every show.
Benare: Is that so?
Samant: Yes. I don’t miss a single one. What other amusements is there in the village?

Benare: That’s true. Did you see the magic- from very near?
Samant: Yes. That is, I wasn’t very close. But still close enough. Why?

Benare: How do they do that- cutting a tongue and putting it back together? [Act One: 3].

In the above example, the two characters Benare and Samant talk about magic shows and various performances. They
form a close bond by talking about topics which are familiar to both of them. This is one kind of a politeness strategy that Benare employs in getting Samant’s attention. She gives importance to the ‘other’, by persuading him to talk about his knowledge about magic shows. Apart from her curiosity about the subject, her need to marry Samant is what drives her to converse with the latter.

Promising is also another form of positive politeness strategy. In both the plays, we see the characters establishing a bond as well as a rapport between themselves, by the act of promising. Speech acts, like the commissives play an active role in politeness strategies. The act of promising is very important in the inter-relationships between people. In Nagamandala, the flames and the Man become friendly with the Story, by their act of promising.

New Flame: “Come on. Why are you so despondent? We are here and free the whole night. We’ll listen to you.

Story: Thank you dears. Its kind of you. But what is the point of your listening to a story? You can’t pass it on.

Flames: That’s true… What can we do? Wish we could help.

Man: I’ll listen to you.” [Prologue: 4].

In the above dialogues, the man, the flames, and the Story, offer to do each other a favour, by listening to the story.
Everyone benefits from this kind of kinship, shown amidst them. The man escapes death, the flames have a new topic for gossip, and the Story, gets her story being told to others. The act of promising and cooperation brings them together, till the culmination of the story. This positive politeness strategy of promising each other helps them to achieve their intentions, even though they belong to different realms of the world.

Tendulkar’s play also holds examples of characters declaring their promises and their attitudes of optimism. Mrs. Kashikar promises Rokde that he would get a big role in the play if he gives his evidence properly.

Mrs. Kashikar: “Balu, now give a marvelous, unbroken bit of evidence. If you can manage this, you’ll get a chance later in the show. You’ll never get such a big chance again…” [Act Two: 37].

This act of positive politeness strategy fulfills the hearer’s wants and wishes. Rokde is considered to be immature by all of the members of the theatre group. He is overshadowed by everyone else, in the group, as he is considered by others as being inferior in talent. Mrs Kashikar encourages him to give a good performance as a witness. She knows about his wish to be recognized as an actor, and also as a mature individual. She fulfills it by promising her adopted son, a good chance of becoming an actor. Her instinctive motherly love is shown in her utterance.
4.2.3 Offering Sympathy, Cooperation etc.

The plays which are considered for study also have instances where the characters offer sympathy, cooperation, in helping others. Any utterance that helps the listener become comfortable and happy, is to that extent, an act of politeness. In a dialogic conversation, it becomes impolite on the part of the speaker if he/she ignores their conversational partners. Mutual sympathy, for one another, brings in an intimacy, an assurance for sharing of confidences, between each other.

Naga, the cobra, in Karnad’s play, makes use of this kind of strategy of positive politeness. When he meets Rani for the first time, he empathizes with her, by talking about her husband’s cruelty.

Naga: “No. I said you are very beautiful. Poor thing!
Rani: Poor thing-?
Naga: That a tender bud like you should get such a rotten husband.
Rani: I didn’t say anything!
Naga: You didn’t. I am saying it. Did it hurt … the beating this morning?
Rani: No.
Naga: Locked up in the house all day… you must be missing your parents” [Act Two: 19].

He makes use of the sympathy strategy, to converse with Rani. He talks about her miserable condition of being locked up
in the house, about the beatings by her husband etc. Naga extends his concern for Rani by professing his sympathy for her, by calling her ‘poor thing’. This is the most effective method of positive politeness strategies. He talks about her parents, who are very close to her. Naga achieves two things by this strategy. As said earlier, the addressee’s face is appreciated and admired, by this act. He becomes the close confidante of Rani. She tells her worries to him. Secondly, his act brings a change in Rani’s attitude towards him. Rani is ignorant of the fact that the Appanna who comes to her in the nights, is Naga. Naga has assumed her husband Appanna’s form so that she would love him. Naga wants to banish the fear about Appanna’s cruelty, from Rani’s heart. Hence he sympathizes with her, and achieves his intention.

Benare, the protagonist is the victim of impolite behavior all throughout the play *Silence! The Court is in Session*. The other characters do not show any concern towards and do not cooperate with her in her situation. Samant is the only person who shows her some consideration. Politeness and formality share a relationship. According to Tanner (1973:89) ‘politeness and formality are inseparable’. The extent of politeness between individuals will depend upon the formality between them. The more formal, the addressee is with the addressor, the more extent of politeness is between them. Samant and Benare are strangers to each other. They meet for the first time, when they arrive for the performance. So he does not know the real character of
Benare. Hence throughout the play, in various scenes he is seen worried for Benare’s welfare.

Samant: “No, No she was alone with me a little while ago… ”

[Act Three: 56].

When Mrs. Kashikar claims that Benare has made overtures to Rokde, Samant defends Benare by denying that she has not made any overtures to him, when they were alone. Here, he aggressively speaks in favour of Benare.

When Ponkshe says that Benare always carries TIK-20, a powerful bedbug poison in her bag, so that she could commit suicide anytime she wanted, Samant refutes him by saying that she would be carrying it in her purse, so as to take it home. He cannot believe that Benare could do such an act like that, because to him, she is lovely and smart, who can take care of herself.

Samant: (to Karnik) “Perhaps she was taking it home” [Act Three: 59].

In another scene, Samant is visibly perturbed at the news that Benare would lose her job, due to her pregnancy out of wedlock. The following exclamation of Samant shows how he finds it difficult to believe that an efficient teacher like Benare can lose her job., He is so impressed with her dedication, and love for her profession , that he wants to believe that everything should result in her well being, and not in her destruction.

Samant: “Dear, oh dear! Is she going to lose her job”? [Act Three: 69].
In all the above illustrations, one can see that, Samant is cooperative with Benare and supports her for everything. He offers her sympathy, and empathizes with her. He wants Benare to be happy, and he tries his best to prove it to the others, in whichever way possible. Unlike the other characters who know Benare on a more personal front, are not polite with her. Samant, a stranger, whom she is just acquainted with, is polite with her. Hence, politeness plays a big role in formality. There are less face threatening acts and more face saving acts, between people who are thrown together, in certain situations.

4.3 Negative politeness

Politeness is a way of avoiding a threat to the negative face of the addressee. The addressee employs various means to indicate that the addressee’s freedom of action and freedom of imposition will be honoured. Negative politeness bears a resemblance to Lakoff’s principles of formality and deference. According to the rule of formality and deference, the addressee creates a distance between himself and the addressee. The rule of deference prescribes that the speaker gives the addressee the option of how to behave and what to think. Eg: the use of tag questions, hedges and conversational implicatures, makes the speaker’s statements, requests etc., less imposing on the addressee.

There are ten ways of saving the negative self image of the addressee, according to Brown and Levinson. But due to the limitation of the study, only a few significant methods are being
highlighted in both of the plays. The main methods of saving the negative self-image of the addressee, which are predominant in the above mentioned plays, are indirectness, deferential methods, generalization etc.

4.3.1 Conventional Indirectness

Indirectness somehow creates a divided illocution, in the sense that one utterance maybe interpreted in two or more different ways by two or more addressees, because the relation between the speaker and the addressees and the amount of shared knowledge between them cannot be identified.

In the two plays, the characters use indirectness to convey what they have in mind. The intentions that occur in a character’s mind would have different meanings, and the addressee may or may not interpret it in the same manner. Consider the dialogue between Kurudava and Rani:

Kurudava: (pause) “Does he... talk to you?

Rani : Oh, that he does. But not a syllable more than required.


Kurudava: You mean-? That means- you are- still –hmm!

Rani : Apart from him, you are the first person I have seen since coming here. I'm bored to death. There is no one to talk to!

Kurudava finds it difficult to phrase the intention in her mind. She wants to ask Rani whether she and Appanna have started their relationship as husband and wife in every sense of the word—mentally and physically. Being a woman as well as a conservative person of the old school of thought, Kurudava indirectly puts her question to the young wife. But Rani, who takes the term ‘talk’ in the literal sense, fails to understand the older woman. Here Kurudava, makes use of indirectness to enquire about Rani. She is too polite enough to embarrass the young girl by asking her directly. Hence one can see that she saves the negative self image of Rani.

In Tendulkar’s play, the indirectness used by the characters in their conversations, show the narrow mindedness of the Indian society. Their verbal interactions are inundated with indirectness, which is very common among Indians. The conversation between Sukhatme, Rokde and Mrs. Kashikar is a perfect example.

Sukhatme: ... “There’s some substance in what Mr. Samant said. Even though it came from a book. It holds water!

Mrs. Kashikar: Do you mean that Miss Benare and Professor Da-

Sukhatme: Yes. Beyond a shadow of doubt! There’s no question about it.

Mrs. Kashikar: Good Gracious!

Rokde: (Now very daring) I knew it along!”[Act Two:48].
From their conversation, it is apparent that they are talking about Benare’s and Prof. Damle’s relationship. The ‘it’ in the sentences refers to their love affair. The other characters do not want to mention it openly. They do not talk about the relationship openly, but the characters decipher as to what each one means. Having sexual relationships without marriage is taboo in the society. The exclamation that Mrs. Kashikar utters is a proof of her disbelief. They cannot accept the relationship, and do not want to talk about it either.

4.3.2 Use of Deferential Modes

Deference is a double sided phenomenon which finds manifestation either in the lowering of the self or the raising of the other or both at a time. It can be called as ‘formal politeness’ (Yule1996:81) For example, compliments, greetings and modes of address or honorifics. This type of politeness of raising the ‘other’ is normally used in Indian fiction. Conversations are a constant flow of verbal interactions in which, compliments are a part of making the other person happy, and become more cooperative. This strategy is used by one of the flames in the prologue of Nagamandala.

Flame 3: “You are lucky. My master’s eyes have to feast on his wife limb by limb if the rest of him is to react. So we lamps have to bear witness to what is better left to the dark” [Prologue: 3].

The above utterance is the reply to Flame Four’s description of how the latter could leave the house early so it
could assemble in the temple before the other flames arrived. The words of Flame Three are a kind of deferential strategy to make the other person feel happy. By talking about its misfortune of having a master who needs to look at his wife in the light of the flame, Flame Three is lowering himself to praise the other, by complimenting on Flame Four’s good luck. According to Ashok Thorat (2000), there are different kinds of classification of compliments: face to face compliments and in-absentia compliments. We praise somebody in front of us because we want to satisfy his desire to be liked and approved of. When people are admired and their qualities are publicized and advertised, they feel elated and the complimenter and complimentee are glued together in a bond of social solidarity and camaraderie. Flame Three uses the same strategy by complimenting the other flame. By this deferential strategy, it achieves its intention.

One of the other deferential strategies that is the use of honorifics, while conversing with each other. There are three types of honorific as stated in Patil’s (1994) *Style in Indian Fiction in English: A Study in Politeness Strategies.*

a) Speaker-addressee axis- the relation of speaker to hearer.
b) The speaker-referent axis- the relation of speaker to things or persons referred to.
c) The speaker bystander axis- the relation of speaker or hearer to bystanders or overhearers. (Huzoor, Maharaj, janab).
Among the three types of honorifics, the one which needs special mention with regard to Indian writing is the third type, because this belongs to the address forms that people use to address others. These address forms; depend on the extent of the depth of relationship between the speaker and the hearer. A form of address can have a social meaning. The social component consists of speaker addressee relationship, speaker’s evaluation of addressee and situation, and of speaker’s background. All these things are expressed in the use of a given form of address. Address forms also include a potential of more than one social aspect- distance, status, comradeship, solidarity, equality, brotherhood, friendship, irony and so on. It is a well known fact that terms of address and reference differ from culture to culture.

Many of the terms of address and reference used in the Indian society are terms from Indian languages. As the two plays mentioned for study are translations of plays in Kannada and Marathi, the address terms used are more or less based on the translation of the exact address terms in both the languages. One can divide these terms into kinship terms (as stated earlier) honorific terms. ‘Brother’, ‘sister’, ‘mother’, ‘uncle’, ‘aunt’ are kinship terms; ‘sahib’, ‘huzoor’, ‘sarkar’ and ‘hukkum’ are honorific terms. An Indian is required in his culture to behave in a respectable way and also to be respectful of others, especially persons who are of higher status either in age or their positions and educational background in the society. Hence one can see that the address terms used in the plays, are mostly honorific
terms, as in both plays, characters belonging to different backgrounds are put together like a tossed salad.

One common honorific that is used in the Indian society is ‘Sahib’. This term can function either independently as an address form or in conjunction with nouns signifying last names, designations or educational status. One comes across an example in *Silence! The Court is in Session*. This term is used by Samant, a local villager in addressing the other characters in the play. He is impressed by the appearance of Ponkshe, and instinctively addresses him as ‘sahib’ to show respect to the latter.

Samant: (to Ponkshe, awed by his sahib-like appearance) “Do sit down, sahib.

Ponkshe: (pleased at the ‘sahib’) No, thank you, I was sitting in the train. Er-What’s your name?

Samant: Samant. I’m from this village, sir” [Act One: 13].

Apart from the term ‘sahib’, Samant also addresses Ponkshe as ‘sir’, which gives an additional upliftment to the hearer. The stage directions also emphasize the effect of the honorific term that Samant uses to address Ponkshe. Ponkshe is obviously pleased at this strategy of politeness which is evident from the directions given by the playwright. He reciprocates politely to Samant, by asking his name, and thereby establishing a rapport between the two. It prevents any kind of face threatening acts, between the speaker and the hearer. Hence one can see that it equalizes the hierarchal difference between Samant, a local and Ponkshe, the science student, and bridges
the gap of awkwardness between the two, in terms of their background differences.

4.4 Politeness and Playwrights

Unlike the analysis done on speech acts and cooperative principle, which focuses mainly on the dialogues between the characters, politeness being a universal phenomenon goes beyond the fictional characters, and it becomes important to bring out the playwrights’ notion on the concept of politeness. The creator of any fictional work, behind the scenes, controls the action in the plots of any genre, be it fiction, plays etc. In spite of their invisibility, they are considered to be omnipresent. Hence their involvement in the area of politeness is unavoidable.

Politeness in the use of language by the authors, playwrights when they communicate their thoughts to the readers, needs to be analyzed. Drama, which consists mainly of dialogues, the playwright’s presence is almost negligible. However, the dialogues of the characters bring out the extent of politeness used by the playwrights in their respective texts. And this becomes the language of the playwrights—polite or impolite, which has an effect on the readers. Studies have been conducted on the politeness of the language used by the authors, playwrights, poets in their works. For instance, Alexander Pope, belonged to what we call the age of politeness. His poem The Rape Of The Lock is greatly accepted, in spite of a totally different perspective, that has been portrayed in the work. In other phases of culture, his politeness has been valourized in
anything like the Augustan manner. But T.S Eliot's *Wasteland*, for instance was not accepted. For many of its first readers, politeness consideration was certainly raised, and in that they found it profoundly shocking and even insulting. Hence, like oxygen, politeness in the writer’s language has always been there, before any one could identify and name it. It is in the very heart of any literary activity. Consciously or unconsciously, the reader will always have an immediate response to the degree of politeness experienced in the author’s writing and the author being aware of it takes it into account while writing.

This is where the interpersonality of writing comes in, which was something that the earlier scholars had their doubts about. Even today, linguists including some pragmaticists do not fully recognize that writing does have a politeness dimension. The fullest study of politeness is by Penelope Brown, and Stephen Levinson [1987], but all their examples are drawn from face to face spoken interchange. And this has been applied to the verbal interchange between the characters in the plays in the first half of this chapter.

Geoffrey Leech [1983:109] has also contributed to the field of politeness, but he sees communication as a far more dynamic process than the speech act theorists do, and discerns a category of collaborative illocutionary functions where the illocutionary goal is indifferent to what he calls the social goal and where politeness is irrelevant. This polite language activity includes “asserting, reporting, announcing and instructing and according to Leech “most written discourse come into this
category as well” On this view, writing is definitely, less politeness- oriented than speech. In its own way, Leech’s account makes sense and can describe important aspects of linguistic activity. Seen this way, politeness is the essence, precisely because; writing involves such a heavy burden of solstice boldness and unmitigated finality. It is this boldness, with which they express their views that determines the degree of politeness in their writing.

Tendulkar and Karnad are dramatists with different perspectives of writing. Tendulkar’s plays portray the harsh realities of life, with full transparency. It is quite evident in his use of language too. To depict the raw emotions of the characters in his plays, he makes use of language which is real, hence without any shred of politeness. His characters are probably less polite, when compared to the characters portrayed by Karnad. Even the title Silence! The Court is in Session, blatantly shows impoliteness. The admonitory word is intended to suggest the peremptoriness with which patriarchy seeks to perpetuate its hegemony by systematically silencing all the voices of protest, while silence is a curse under which the repressed and the marginalized have labored all over the world. PurakasyasthaT.D (2006) writes about the themes of silence in the play Nagamandala Girish Karnad’s Nagamandala, is marked by a meaningful engagement with the topes of a silent woman, whose speechlessness, Karnad regards with interest for its subversive potential. It is a landmark because of the way, it challenges the role of drama, basically a verbal artifact as a medium intended to
capture the silence of the speechlessness with all its nuances. There are instances in both the plays where, the characters make use of aggravating language. They make use of positive and negative kinds of aggravating language, like expressing dislike for the addressee, offending the addressee's beliefs and sensibilities, use of sarcasm, use of interruption etc, and the latter group includes threats and explicit references to the addressee's status, reference to rights and obligations of the addressee etc.

Characters of both the plays are subjected to impoliteness from other characters. Just like the politeness strategies depend on the status, age, background etc., between the addressee and the addresseeor, impoliteness strategies also are measured using the same scale. For instance, the protagonist of Nagamandala, Rani is being verbally abused by her husband Appanna.

Appanna: “Aren’t you ashamed to admit it, you harlot? Open the door! Open the door, you whore! All right then, I’ll show you. I’ll go to the Village elders. If they don’t throw that child into boiling oil and you along with it, my name is not Appanna” [Act.Two:33]

Appanna abuses her, when he comes to know that she is pregnant. Appanna knows that he has not had any kind of intimate relationship with Rani, and he is thereby angered by her pregnancy. From Act One onwards, one can see that Appanna speaks to Rani in monosyllables. But in the last act, Appanna uses aggravating language to threaten her. He addresses her, as harlot, whore, which are terms that are used to refer to
prostitutes. This is an example of negative aggravation. Appanna
is threatening Rani, as well as abusing her. It is a face threatening
act, which the speaker puts blatantly, in order to intimidate
Rani which is achieved accordingly.

The mother-son bond between Kurudava and Kappanna,
influences the language used among themselves. The familiarity
quotient between them results in a not-so polite language. The
two of them have lived together for so long, that they have taken
each other for granted. Kurudava commands more authority over
her son, as she is his mother, and this is clear from her utterances.


Kurudava: “Shut up! … [Act One: 15].

Kurudava: “I said come here. This fool doesn’t understand a
thing. Quick!...”[Act Two:27].

Hence one can see that familiarity between individuals can
bring about a change in the use of polite language. People are
polite with strangers, because they have the desire to be liked and
appreciated. But they can afford to use impoliteness in their
interaction, and in most cases, this type of behavior is not
considered as a face threatening act, by the addressee.

In Silence! The Court Is In Session, the language which is
used here, by the characters, more or less falls into a category of
impoliteness. There is every kind of aggravating language being
used here, ranging from positive aggravation to negative
aggravation. There are scenes where, people snub the sensibilities
of others; used sarcastic remarks against each other, interrupted the conversations, used threats etc.

The husband- wife duo of Tendulkar’s play, Mr and Mrs Kashikar, share a relationship which is based on the attitude of the patriarchal society. Throughout the play, Mr. Kashikar addresses Mrs.Kashikar in an impolite manner. Sometimes he speaks to her sarcastically, in a commanding way, interrupts her when she talks etc, thereby showing that he uses negative aggravating language, while addressing her. Tendulkar has brought out the pathos of an Indian wife, and the manner in which she is treated by her husband who is ironically considered as equivalent to God in the Indian society. The language of Mr. Kashikar is definitely far from being polite.

Kashikar: [banging the gavel]. “Silence must be observed while the court is in session. Can’t shut up at home, can’t shut up here”[ActTwo:29].

When Mrs. Kashikar, narrates the proceedings of the court trial to Samant, Mr. Kashikar gets irritated with her, for interrupting the session. Even though it is just a mock trial, and it is not necessary to keep silent in the make shift court, Mr Kashikar admonishes his wife for talking during the trial. In another instance, he interrupts her, and does not give her a chance to talk. He cuts her off abruptly when she attempts to talk to Sukhatme.

Mr.Kashikar:“Wait, What do you mean, ‘Thank you’, Mrs.Kashikar?” The accused has not yet told you
her age. I was listening carefully. Prisoner Benare, your age!

Mrs. Kashikar: But I –

Mr. Kashikar: It is not the custom of any court to accept someone else to answer when the accused is questioned. Don’t interrupt” [Act Three: 52].

Mr. Kashikar is indifferent to Mrs. Kashikar’s words. When Benare is asked about her age, she remains silent. It is Mrs. Kashikar who tells Benare’s age to the court. Mr. Kashikar gets angry for it and ignores Mrs. Kashikar’s statements. He dismisses her protests of being ignored and commands Sukhatme to continue with the case. Here we see that Mr. Kashikar reprimands her in public, without any misapprehensions. It is the male ego centric society that is being represented by Mr. Kashikar, in which a woman’s voice is being ignored.

Mr. Kashikar also comments about his wife’s behavior to Sukhatme. When Sukhatme asks Mrs. Kashikar to give her testimony in the dock, she eagerly gets up to answer the questions.

Kashikar :( To Sukhatme) “Look. That’s eagerness for you! You’ve hardly called her, and there she is!” [Act Three: 53].

Kashikar points out sarcastically about Mrs. Kashikar’s eagerness in giving her testimony. This tells about his attitude towards his wife. He does not care about anyone’s presence, and
insults her in public. The mutual respect that should be the cornerstone of a relationship between the husband and wife duo, is absent in their relationship.

Paying no heed to one’s suggestions or overlooking it, is one kind of impoliteness. This rises from the hierarchal system that is prevalent in the Indian society. Rokde is the adopted son, of Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar. He has been brought up on their charity. But it is clear from their dialogues that they consider him inferior, and reminds him that he is obliged to them always. The authority with which Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar address him shows their dominance over him.

Mrs. Kashikar: Balu, have you brought out all the luggage?

Rokde: Absolutely.

Kasihkar : Each time you say you’ve brought it all, Rokde and each time you forget something. Have you got the usher’s staff? Don’t just nod your head. Show it if you have it. Let me see- [Act One: 14].

In the above passage, we can see that, Mr. Kashikar is impolite with Rokde. He shouts at Rokde, regardless of anything and anyone. This behavior of Mr. Kashikar, influences all the other characters. They lack respect for Rokde and treat him in a similar manner. The fact that Rokde is an orphan, and was given free education by Mr and Mrs. Kashikar, lowers the position of Rokde in front of others. When Rokde asks Karnik, whether he can play the role of the fourth witness, the latter opposes it and directs him to stick to the part.
Rokde: [gathering up his courage]. “Can I please do that part today? It’s just a small one- anyone can do mine- I know the fourth witness lines off by- heart...

Karnik: I oppose it! Even if you’re just an usher, your character isn’t an easy one to play. So what if he has no lines? It can’t be managed by putting up with someone else at the last minute. Stick to your part, Rokde” [Act One: 17].

Even though Rokde asks politely to give him the fourth witness’s role, Karnik impolitely refuses it. He orders Rokde to continue playing his part as an usher, thereby paying no heed to Rokde’s wishes. Hence one can see this as an example of negative aggravation. The addressee does not take the addressee’s welfare into consideration. Even Benare, who is portrayed to be the victim in this play, considers Rokde as inferior. She makes fun of Rokde and his inability to do anything on his own. She addresses him as ‘Poor Balu’ in many instances. She shows sympathy for him by uttering “What a baby the poor thing is”. But in reality, she is making fun of Rokde. Rokde is aware of this, and he keeps warning Benare to stop making fun of him, but to no avail. She continues making fun of him in the first half of the play.

Within the above examples drawn from the two plays, one can see the politeness strategies, used by both playwrights in their respective plays. The polite as well as the impolite conversation between the characters, bring out the stylistic features in which, they have made their impact among the
audience. When Tendulkar's play was first staged in India, it was plagued by a lot of controversies. It shocked the sensibilities of the people in the country by the use of its blatant impolite conversations of the characters. It unleashed characters in a state of collision with the accepted norms and on the other, it revealed ineffectual middle class types with an ugly, vicious leer lurking under a smug surface. Girish Karnad's play did have an impact on the Indian society, as that of Tendulkar's play. Nagamandala, still remains in the hearts of the people, till date, and various remakes have been done on the same subject. Here the influence of his play has been great indeed, but Karnad has done it in a subtle way. The language that has been used is not as explosive or blatant, as we see in the other play. The conversations between the characters are effective, but they do not stir up the dormant emotions in the readers, but lead them to notice the undercurrents of the male dominant society and its influence on women. Apart from the character, Appanna, in the play, there is no other character that uses aggravating language. Hence one can see that Karnad and Tendulkar have driven their point across, in their own styles of writing.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter does an analysis of the politeness strategies – positive and negative that the characters use to converse with each other. As mentioned earlier, the manner in which the characters talk to each other determine the relationships between themselves. One can see that the strategies used in the plays by the characters show the extent of familiarity,
sincerity and reciprocity that bond them together, and reveal a (polite) dimension in the Indian society. The chapter also focuses on the politeness strategies used by the playwrights, by making the characters their mouthpieces, to make a point in the society. The aggravating language used by the characters reveal the playwrights’ different styles of writing, and how the language used in the plays bring about different responses to them. The politeness principle thereby helps in dissecting the manner of the communication of the themes which are predominant in the two plays.