CHAPTER – II

Violence, Gendered Violence, and Representation

Defining and explaining violence is a scientific challenge of the highest order. Its ambiguity, the ubiquity of its occurrence, its immediate availability as a resource, and the cognitive indistinctness of the human understanding of violence mark some of the difficulties. (Heitmeyer 2006:659)

This chapter would discuss the notion of violence in general by taking into consideration its theoretical and sociological aspects. Violence is inseparably linked to the concept of power, which in turn is very much a part of the debate on gender. Power seems to be the common factor connecting gender and violence. Hence, the three concepts violence, gender, and power are interlinked. Although my major concern is gendered violence and its representation in contemporary Indian drama, I find it necessary to begin with a general discussion on the notion of violence, of which gendered violence may be considered a sub category. The typology and general nature of violence remain the same in its materialisation; only the degree of its application differs when the question of question of gender comes up. The existing binary gender divide makes women more vulnerable to various forms of violence as compared to men.

Defining Violence

The word “Violence” is derived from the Latin word Violentia, which literally means intense force. Generally, violence is used to refer to the use of physical and emotional force; an aggressive tendency to hurt; or simply violent behaviour that would involve injury and violation to persons, animals, and property. In Understanding Violence, E.K. Englander states that in its common use violence refers to an aggressive
behaviour with the intent to cause harm, both physical and mental. Violence is a behaviour that produces human misery; which does not conform to any solution. He points out that “intent” is central to the notion of violence. Any psychological and physical violence that occur by accident is not violence, if it is not intended to cause harm (2003:1-2).

Defining violence Marvin E. Wolfgang says: “Violence is a generic term that may include many forms of overt and often noxious, expressions, ranging from internal psychological changes in the organism to external behaviour that directly impinges upon the safety and security of other organisms...” (1966: 2). Discussing Newton Garver’s definition of violence, Joseph Betz says: “If violence is violating a person or a person’s rights, then every social wrong is a violent one...If violence is whatever violates a person and his rights of body, dignity or autonomy, then lying to or about another, embezzling, locking one out of his house, insulting, and gossiping are all violent acts” (Betz 1997: 341). Commenting on the concept of violence in Religion and Violence: Philosophical Respective from Kant to Derrida, Hent de Vries says:

The concept of violence is both empirical and...transcendental or metaphysical, belonging to the realm traditionally ascribed to the a priori, to the intelligible or the noumenal (as Kant would say), in short, to ideality and idealization as such. Violence, in both the widest possible and the most elementary senses of the word, entails any cause, any justified or illegitimate force, that is exerted — physically or otherwise — by one thing (event or instance, group or person, and, perhaps, word and object) on another. (2001:1)

All of these definitions of violence point to its complicated nature and the difficulties associated with arriving at a single conclusion about it. Considering violence as the “other” of philosophy, Tobin Siebers, in his article titled “Philosophy and Its Other - Violence: A Survey of Philosophical Repression from Plato to Girard”
points to the representation as well as repression of violence in philosophy. According to Siebers, philosophy represents violence as an idea rather than as a phenomenon, while the phenomenology of violence remains repressed as a philosophical subject (1995:1). Generally, violence has been categorized into visible violence or overt violence and invisible violence or covert violence. Visible violence seems to designate something visible, a happening in the physical world, which can be seen and recognized. Invisible violence is less spectacular, but perhaps more dangerous, having deep psychological and emotional impact.

In *Violence and the Sacred*, René Girard makes some significant observations on the nature of violence. Violence is self-propagating, and only violence can put an end to violence. It is eminently communicable, and like a raging fire it feeds on the very objects intended to smother its flame (2005: 27-32). The more people try to curb their violent impulses, the more the violent impulses seem to increase. Girard finds an inseparable relationship between violence and desire. According to him, desire is essentially mimetic and mimetism is the source of continual conflict. Mimesis coupled with desire automatically leads to conflict. By making one man’s desire into a replica of another man’s desire, it invariably leads to rivalry; and rivalry in turn transforms desire into violence (2005:179). Girard also points to the eminently communicable nature of violence. Violence always has a tendency to hurl on the surrogate victim if it is deprived of its original object. It is a contaminating process (2005: 31).

In *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Slavoj Žižek talks about the need to look beyond the visible subjective violence caused by an identifiable source to symbolic violence embodied in language, and systematic violence caused by the economic and political systems. He distinguishes between subjective violence and objective violence.
and says that the former is visible while the later is invisible; both cannot be perceived from the same standpoint (2009:1-3). The symbolic violence embedded in language can also be termed as linguistic violence in which language is considered as institution encouraging psychological violence, rather than physical violence. This particular kind of violence is important for the purpose of this thesis, given that language is the core mimetic element representing violence in the plays chosen for study.

Introducing the notion of linguistic violence, W.C. Gay says that language can be used to demean social differences among people and inflict violence against them. As language is considered as an institution, it can be used as an instrument for perpetrating both personal covert violence and institutional covert violence. Linguistic violence is the situation in which individuals are hurt by the use of words; it includes subtle, abusive and grievous form (1999: 305-06). Three possible interpretation of linguistic violence include: 1) violence can be located in language, at the lexico-semantic level, which, very simplistically, means that there are words that are inherently violent, which hurt or offend; 2) violence can be built up in discourse, through discourse techniques and strategies, which means that it can be: a) intentional, or b) unintentional, and also that a particular discourse structure can be perceived by its addressee or by a hearer as offending/hurting or not; 3) violence can be identified both in language and in discourse (Scripnic 2009: 152). Violence inherent in language and discourse is of particular importance while analysing gendered violence. Often it is seen that women are verbally abused in public or domestic spheres by using words such as “witch”, “bitch”, “spinster” and “whore”, to name a few. Violence inherent in the application of such words (loaded with negative connotations) to define women is not overt, but they are capable of hurting a woman psychologically. Moreover, often
the third person personal pronoun "it" is used to refer to women (used generally to refer to animals or things) by reducing them to the status of an object.

Emphasising violence as a subjective idea, David Riches develops the idea of "triangle of violence" which distinguishes between the viewpoints of the performer; victim, and witness. According to him, the performer may see a violent act as justified and therefore legitimate. On the other hand the witness may have a different range of views depending on his/her relation with either the performer or the victim or both. Similarly, the victim may see the same violent act as unjustified or illegitimate.

According to Riches, the performance of violence is inherently liable to be contested on the question of legitimacy (in Stewart 2002: 3). However, the phrase "legitimate authority" itself is a contested and incoherent one. What constitutes legitimate use of violence in one culture may not necessarily apply to another. This triangle is also relevant to my context of theatrical representation of gendered violence. For example, a scene of violence contained in a play may not be represented as violence by the director on stage; or it may not be considered as violence by the audience/reader. The scene containing violence may be represented as justified by the director; or viewed as a justified or legitimised act by the audience. Hence, in the theatrical representation of violence also, a lot depends on the perspective of the viewer or the performer (here the director who directs a performance) whose response to an act of violence is in turn shaped by his/her cultural belongings. For example, in Majula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out*, the act of a woman being gang raped is not considered as violence by the onlookers; they try to justify that act of sexual violence by naming it as ritual or religious ceremony.
In this context Ludwig Wittgenstein’s observation in *The Philosophical Investigations* (1958) on the use of language and its meaning: that a word’s meaning could only be understood by observing its functions in a particular context, may be instrumental in dealing with the complexities pertaining to the understanding of violence. According to Wittgenstein, the task of a philosopher in investigating meaning is to “look and see” the variety of uses to which a word is put. The meaning of a particular word depends on the context in which it is used, and varies from context to context. Similarly people’s perceptions of the word violence may also vary in diverse contexts turning the concept of violence totally confused, conflicting, and multifaceted. Context and individual perspective constitute two essential factors for determining the appropriateness of a violent act.

**Violence and Power**

The notion of violence can not be separated from the notion of power which is another problematic concept and varies from thinkers to thinkers among various disciplines. Robert Paul Wolff discusses power in relation to force and authority and says that power in general is the ability to make and enforce decisions. Discussing power and violence, he uses the two terms — de-facto authority (the right to command and to be obeyed) and de-jure authority (the ability to get one’s authority claims accepted against whom they are asserted). According to him, de facto authority is a form of power as it is a means by which its possessor can enforce his decisions. Wolff points out three ways through which power is exercised in a society — firstly, by the use of force, which means the ability to rearrange the world in ways that the other people find appealing or distasteful. Secondly, by the use of de-facto authority that means the ability to elicit obedience and thirdly by the use of social opinion, or what
is also known as the symbolic use of force. Violence is closely linked with the idea of legitimate authority and it is defined as the illegitimate or unauthorised use of force to effect decisions against the will or desire of others. Here violence refers to the use of force the ways that are unauthorised by those who are generally accepted as the legitimate authorities in the territory. Although Wolff talks about violence mainly in terms of legitimate authority, he seems to be critical of the very concept of legitimate authority which he calls as an “ineradicable irrationality”; it does not take into consideration the question of the appropriateness of violence. Our ability to decide between the justified or unjustified, legitimate or illegitimate use of forces belongs to moral philosophy; a matter of choice accompanied by our values and obligations. But only the political concept of violence can be given a coherent meaning by invoking the doctrine of legitimate political authority (1969:601-16).

The French philosopher Michel Foucault has offered a relational concept of power. According to him:

...power is never something that someone possesses, anymore that is that emanates from someone. Power does not belong to anyone to or even to a group; there is only power because there are dispersions, relays, networks, reciprocal supports, differences of potential discrepancies etcetera. It is in this system of differences, which have to be analysed, that power can start to function. (2006: 4)

Foucault seems to be more interested in “relations of power” instead of power in general. In his definition of the relational concept of power, different individual occupies a precise function in a system of power and this tactical arrangement enables power to be exercised. For him power is neither inherently positive nor negative; power is ability to bring social change. Power does not mean repression only and it is not evil unless it is used to curb the freedom of others.
Where there is power, there is also resistance. This is what Foucault explains in his *History of Sexuality, Vol – I*. Commenting on the inseparable link between power and resistance, he says that where there is power there is resistance and this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power (2008: 95). Resistance comes from the lesser forms of power exercised by the perverse, by students and so on - the counter-hegemonic subject categories. However, like many other philosophers, Foucault also contemplates over the notion of violence and points to the inseparable link between power and violence. In *Psychiatric Power* (2006) which is a collection of his lectures, Foucault says that violence is always the outcome of the exercise of physical power. He seems to suggest that all power is physical and its point of application is the body. Good power or simply power or power not permeated by violence is not physical power (2006:14).

Louis Althusser in his well known work *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (1971) discuses the notion of power in its relation to the state. The state, being the supreme political institution and repressive apparatus of society, maintains its power by “Repressive State Apparatuses” (RSA) such as the police, the law, the government, the prisons etc. as well as “Ideological State Apparatuses” (ISA) such as the churches, the trade unions, some school, the media, the cultural ventures etc. The repressive state apparatuses are part of the public domain whereas the ideological state apparatuses are part of the private domain. Both RSA and ISA function by violence and ideology. The only suitable difference between the two is that while RSA functions massively and predominantly by repression and violence and secondarily by ideology, the ISA functions massively and predominantly by ideology and secondarily by repression. According to Althusser, there is no such thing as
purely as purely ideological apparatus because the institutions like the schools and churches also use suitable methods of punishment and expulsion. Repressive means are used inside the family as well (1971:136-138). The abuse of power by these two apparatuses may also result in both visible and invisible violence and power abused by the state ideological apparatuses seems to be of greater importance than material power. The repressive functioning of media (which is one of ideological state apparatuses) is seen in Vijay Tendulkar’s Kamala where Kamala - the victim of trafficking - is re-victimised in the press conference by a group of journalists. Likewise, the biased functioning of law (which is one of the state repressive apparatuses) in terms of delivering justice to women is evident in a play like Silence! The Court is in Session by Tendulkar.

The notion of violence is closely related to the notion of power which in turn is closely associated with the notions of force, authority, strength etc. In certain contexts it is the abuse of power or illegitimate use of power by society, groups, institutions, and individuals to execute decision against the will of others that results in violence. Violence perpetrated against individuals, communities, and the environment (cutting of earth, hill and trees and so on) is frequently reinforced by those individuals who are in powerful positions along with explicit or implicit power structures. But in some other contexts, it is the decreased sense of power that prompts the government or the governed or common people to take recourse to violence. Violence is accessible to a wide range of people and sometimes a violent act is considered rational if it reaches an end which justifies that particular act of violence. Again, rationality is not applicable to all forms of violent acts, and depends on the context in which violence is used. Thus, the term "violence" remains utterly a
confused one. However, violence is an inescapable fact of human existence. The question why people take recourse to violent behaviour is very difficult to answer. Are people born violent? Do people learn to be violent? Are violent people “mentally ill”? Are violent people different from other people apart from their aggressive behaviour? - are some of the questions associated with the concept of violence. A single factor can not determine why a person exhibits violent behaviour; but a chain of factors are linked and the person’s situation plays an important role.

In the introduction to *On Violence: A Reader*, B.B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim say that violence is a process always accompanied by a context. Context frames not only the actors or victims; it also influences those who represent violence. Context to violence is unlimited and vary depending on different individual’s life experiences, their different locations etc. They also use the metaphor of chain to emphasise the notion of violence. A chain is a construct and can be modified, adjusted, or imagined anew. It is always contingent on specific structures and human agent situated in specific temporal-spatial context. Similarly, violence can be compared to a chain as it is also unstable and unpredictable. Like a chain, violence is also subject to change. Besides, every chain of violence contains links that vary not only in every day context but also in the interpretive lens of each observer of violence (Lawrence et al, 2007: 1-14).

Another important aspect which cannot be ignored while discussing the close connection between power and violence is the notion of the subject. For power to function it always needs acting individuals as its subjects. The action of the individuals makes power operative. On the other hand, to be executed violence always needs a subject — which could be either a human body or an animal body, or an
inanimate being upon whom violence can be executed. Hence, the notion of subject is inseparably linked with the two concepts of power and violence. Foucault attributes two meanings to the word subject – subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity as a subject by conscience or self knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. He also cites three modes of objectification which turn an individual into a subject - the first being the modes of inquiry which give themselves the status of sciences and objectivise the speaking subject in linguistic, the productive subject in economics, and also the sheer fact of being alive in biology. The second being the dividing practices which divide the subject inside himself/herself or from others, such as the mad from the sane, the sick from the healthy and so on. And third being the way how human being turns themselves into subjects such as how men have learnt to recognise themselves as subjects of sexuality (1982:777-81). In the context of this thesis the first division of subject, that is, subject to someone else by control and dependence is applicable. In the subsequent analysis of gendered violence in the select plays we will find that woman still have a subjected position in society caused by the prevalent male control over her. Controlling the woman based on the existing gender bias is an apparent fact. Power is executed over the powerless ones (women) making them subjects. Simultaneously, most women are dependent on men for their economic security: a factor that aggravates their subject status.

Social Institutions and Violence

The functioning of violence is apparent within a number of social institutions. As my study focuses on the representation of gendered violence both in the private and public spheres, a discussion on the various social institutions within which violence is
operative seems to be a necessity. The institutions of violence are mainly considered at three levels - familial, legal, and religious, although the institutional face of violence often remains hidden. Family has been functioning as a violent site encompassing conflicts, hostile and aggressive behaviours, and differences in opinion among the family members. From 1960 onwards the study of family as a site of violence has acquired attention. Examples of family violence include - child abuse, wife beating, violence between siblings, emotional, physical and financial abuse and neglect toward parents and elderly persons. Sigmund Freud makes an important observation in this regard. The facts of psychoanalysis formulated by him show that almost every intimate emotional relation between two people such as - marriage, friendship, the relations between parents and children - contains sediment of feelings of aversion and hostility which only escapes perception as a result of repression (2007: 234). Freud seems to suggest that close relationship inside a family do not really ensure safety. Instead, it allows the possibilities of greater violence legitimised by the social norms as “private” and hence it goes beyond the control of any outside agency.

According to Linda Gordon family violence is not the expression of one person’s violent temperament. It is the result of joint activities by several individuals of the family. Although awareness on family violence has been created by various reform movements including the feminist movement, it has not been stopped. Rather many educated persons, especially the educated married couples consider the incidents of family as normal and acceptable. Gordon calls family violence a political issue emerging from power struggles in a family whose members contest for material, often scarce, benefits (2007: 247-48). Commenting on the locations of family
violence, Richard Gelles says that the most usual place in family violence is the kitchen and next to it is the bedroom; the only room where there is no violence is the bathroom (in Martin 2007: 259). Del Martin observes that the patriarchal system of our society allows a man the right of ownership to some degree over the property and people that comprise his household and thereby becoming a major cause of family violence (2007: 256). According to Englander, there is no universal agreement about what the term family violence means; the two terms “family violence” and “domestic violence” are sometimes seen as synonymous including wife beating, child sexual abuse, elder abuse, marital rape, date rape and so on. Family violence refers to hostile aggression involving those who are intimately associated with each other, not only married couples, but also those living together (2003:3). The cases of family violence are often kept hidden because of a family’s fear of losing its prestige in society. Even, the cases of family violence are neglected (especially when it involves a woman) by the police who tends to consider them as “family spat” unless injuries are visible.

Like the family, which has turned itself into an institution of violence, the legal system can also act as an institution of violence. The hierarchical norms of patriarchy seem to be influential on the legal system as well, making women more vulnerable to violence. In certain cases the legal system acts as an instrument of structural violence encouraging violence and becoming biased. The two essays under the same title “The Shah Bano Case” on the Shah Bano case by Bruce. B. Lawrence and Radha Kumar, discuss the inequitable nature of Indian constitutional system and the systemic structural violence inherent in the Muslim personal law in India. Shah Bano was the daughter of a police constable. She was married to her first cousin Muhammad Ahmed Khan who was an advocate. After forty years of their marriage,
he first evicted her from his home. For almost two and a half years he paid her a maintenance sum, but finally he stopped paying her. When Shah Bano appealed to the district court, her husband decided to divorce her. He paid her three thousand rupees as “mehr” as structured by the Muslim personal law and fulfilled all his legal obligations, according to him. Shah Bano, as she was left impoverished, appealed to the magistrate of a provincial court which, under section 125 of Criminal Procedure Code, allowed her to be given Rs 25/- per month by her husband. She then appealed the High Court of Madhya Pradesh which raised the amount. After this judgment Muhammad Ahmed Khan, who himself was a lawyer, took the case to the Indian Supreme Court saying that the High Court’s judgment violated the Muslim personal law stated by the Shariat. The case continued for another five years and it was really difficult for Shah Bano to continue her struggle. Finally the Indian Supreme Court, supporting the High Court’s judgment, dismissed Muhammad Khan’s appeal. This judgment gave justice to Shah Bano, but immediately after this judgment a group of Muslim people protested against it stating that the judgment violated the norms of Muslim personal law. As a result, a bill was proposed in the parliament seeking to exclude Muslim women from the purview of the section 125; finally the Indian Parliament passed the bill namely the Muslim Women’s Bill. The Bill appeared to be a discriminatory one withdrawing the rights of Muslim women to appeal for maintenance under Criminal Procedure Code and also stating that their husbands obligation to provide them maintenance ends after a period of three months; after which they will be looked after by their family, failing which, the local waqf board (Lawrence 2007: 262-67; Kumar 2008: 495-500).
Commenting on this existing discrimination against women in law, in an article titled “Women’s status and reservation”, Dr Namita Devi says:

“One of the areas of women’s discrimination is the law and order, where massive change is to be brought about. Negligence of these areas results in large scale conversion of girl child into the dark life of prostitution. In India it is difficult to estimate the number of women and the young girls are working as prostitutes against their will. The persons who are criminals and booked for such crimes must get adequate punishment... (2010: 6)

The inherent negative bias against women is evident in connection of the rape laws. The rape trial itself becomes a second and public rape traumatising the victim. Generally, in rape the victim is further victimised because of the dichotomous patriarchal view of “good” woman and “bad” woman. A good woman is the wife-mother living under husband’s protection and the woman who deviates from this norm is bad woman and tacitly assumed to be sexually available because she is “unprotected” (Kosambi 1994:19-24). This kind of attitude towards the victims is clearly represented in Manjula Padmanabhan’s play Lights Out. Similar kind of biased attitude shown by the legal system is discussed by Catherine Mackinnon, who herself is lawyer, legal scholar, and a political activist. She says that “Rather than deterring or avenging rape, the state, in many victims’ experiences, perpetuates it. Women who charge rape say they were raped twice, the second time in court. If the state is male, this is more than a figure of speech” (2007: 291). The rape trial projected in the film Insaf Ka Tarazu (1980) is an appropriate example of this reality. Besides, this legal bias towards women finds potential expression in Vijay Tendulkar’s play Silence! The Court is in Session and also in Dina Mehta’s Brides are not for Burning.

Like family and law, religion also acts as an institution of violence, especially against women; although apparently religion is considered as the opposite of violence.
Religion is a social and cultural construct that encourages non-violence through the application of violent means; and therefore, it is inseparably linked with violence. In most cases of communal violence, religious fundamentalism appears to be the chief cause. Many forms of violence against women in India are justified by invoking religion. Besides, the orthodox religious beliefs which restrict women's freedom are strengthened by patriarchy. Often patriarchy is seen upholding the dominant religious trends; likewise religion also supports the patriarchal system. Both religion and patriarchy function hand in hand in the matters concerning women to keep them under suppression. For example, the *Devadasi* system in India (which has a religious base) makes poor young girls easily vulnerable to sexual abuse by men. Likewise, the practice of *Sati* is also based on religio-cultural beliefs. *Sati* compels a widow to self-immolate herself at the funeral pyre of her husband; it is a social system that sanctions the violent practices against women. In reality, violence is omnipresent; it is inherent in a multitude of individual, institutional, social-cultural, and religious practices of the contemporary society.

**Violence and Memory**

In the contemporary literary and cultural discourse memory has occupied a significant space. The delayed retrieval of painful memories of the past makes the life of the victim more miserable in the present. Many of the chosen plays in this dissertation deal with the damaging after-effects of violence in the life of the characters. Hence, the relationship between violence and memory needs to be looked at. What happens to the victim when the memories of violence are retrieved in the present? What kinds of psychological damages such delayed retrieval creates in the mind of the victims? Is it possible for a victim to overcome such traumatic memories and if possible what are
the means for it? These are some of the questions which will be discussed taking into consideration the chosen plays. To give a few examples, Dina Mehta's play *Getting Away with Murder* represents the plight of Sonali whose present hysterical state is the result of her past experience of child sexual abuse. Dolly in Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* is unable to forget the memories of being beaten up by her husband during pregnancy. The birth of her physically disabled daughter Daksha bears witness to Dolly's experience of physical violence.

The functioning of memory is diverse as memory is invoked to heal, to blame, and to legitimise. Memory has become a major idiom in the construction of both individual and collective identity; it is a site of struggle as well as identification. Memories are not simply records of the past but are interpretative reconstructions influenced by many factors. When memories of violence are recalled, those memories carry additional burden as indictments or confessions, as emblems of a victimised identity. Here the act of remembering takes on performative meaning within a charged field of contested moral and political claims. The individual experience of violence in the past by the women characters like Dolly and Alka in *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Sonali in *Getting Away with Murder*, and Mala in *Thirty Days in September* determine their present identity as victims, and affect their present well-being. The memories of a painful past haunt them in the present.

**Defining Gender**

In the context of my study gender is inextricably linked with violence. Before discussing the notion "gendered violence" and its representation in contemporary Indian drama, I would like to make a brief discussion on the notion of gender itself. In its most common usage, gender refers to the social, cultural, and historical
constructions of sexual differences such as male and female and masculine and feminine in which the female is often seen as the marginalised other; the male as the privileged self. The structure of this binary opposition reinforces power relations by providing a naturalistic justification of women’s sexual, social, and conceptual subordination and men’s superiority. This binary structure follows the norms of patriarchy — a social system placing the father at the centre and thereby empowering men over women — to distinguish between the two sexes. Commenting on the origin of patriarchy, Gerda Lerner in her celebrated book *The Creation of Patriarchy* says that the establishment of patriarchy is not a single event. It is a process developing over a period of nearly 2500 years from almost 3100 to 600 BC. Patriarchy occurred in different societies at different times and pace (1987: 8).

Following patriarchy, gender hierarchies are constructed and legitimised in a process. These gender hierarchies are also strengthened by other multiple factors and discourses. Freud and Lacan recognise that gender difference is socially constructed although both of them are accused of biological determinism. For Lacan, sexual difference is founded in language when the child begins to recognise itself as ‘I’ during the mirror phase by using language. It is after this that the distinction between self and the other becomes distinct. It is through language that the authority of the father is recognised in the symbolic (social) order, which marks the last step of the mirror stage. This emphasis on language clearly situates sexuality as socially constructed. Meanwhile, Freud locates the gender distinction through Oedipal complex where the male child accepts the authority of the father which represents law, order etc. and rejects his mother; hence socialisation of biological distinction results in gender distinctions (in Tolan 2006: 334-335). As gender is a social and
historical construct, the inequalities between men and women on the basis of gender are not the product of a biological difference; they are, instead the product of social and historical differences. Concerns with gender as an investigative category has emerged only in the late twentieth century influenced by the feminist movements. It was absent from the major bodies of social theory articulated from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

In the introduction to 'A Companion to Gender Studies' Philomena Essed, David Theo Goldberg and Audrey Kobayashi say:

If gender is constant, however the ways in which gender is lived are highly fluid, subject to perpetual socio-cultural redefinition and to individual interpretation and expression. Gender expresses itself through sexuality, race, class, and region as well as other meaningful designations of human identity. Gender makes a difference not only it sorts and categorises humanity, but also because humanity is sorted and categorised by other discursive labels such as class or race, by experiences in work, play, family and civic life, which interact with gender to produce a wide variety of outcomes. (2005:1)

Gender is a complex, contested and influential concept; it is historically changing and always on the move. Like violence, gender is also closely associated with power. It is a medium by which the power of patriarchy is articulated. Historically and traditionally, gender has been used as a social force for the concentration of power upon the male side to subjugate women in almost all social activities.

In the introduction to Gender and the politics of History, J.W. Scott defines gender as knowledge about sexual differences. Following Foucault's views on knowledge, she uses knowledge to mean the understanding of human relationships between men and women produced by culture and societies. This knowledge not only refers to ideas, but also to institutions and structures, everyday practices as well as specialised rituals - all of which constitute social relationships. Knowledge is a way of
ordering the world; as such it is not prior to social organisation, it is inseparable from social organisation. Such knowledge is not absolute or true, but always relative. It is produced in complex ways within large epistemic frames that themselves have an (at least quasi-)autonomous history. Its uses and meanings become contested politically; they are the means by which relationships of power – of domination and subordination – are constructed. She also says that gender is the knowledge that establishes meanings for bodily differences and these meanings vary across cultures and social groups (1999:2). Her definition of gender has two parts and several subsets. The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power (1999:42). According to her, gender offers both a good way of thinking about history, about the ways in which hierarchies of difference – inclusions and exclusions – have been constituted, and of theorising (feminist) politics (1999:10).

Gender is also closely associated with the term sex. The feminists of the 1960s and 1970s made an essentialist claim that sex is biological while gender is a cultural construct. Sex refers to the biological categories such as male and female while gender refers to the cultural and social meanings and identities imposed on each sex. Each society has its own cultural norms to transform a male or female into masculine and feminine. This process is known as gendering which creates hierarchical divisions between men and women by privileging the interests of men over women. The poststructuralist feminist thinkers like Judith Butler and Donna Haraway reject this sex/gender distinction and emphasise that both are constructs. According to Butler, both sex and gender are the products of the same discursive norms. Sex does not
determine gender; rather it is the performative effect of gender. Butler says “Gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which a “sexed nature” or a “natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive”, prior to culture…” (2007:10). This statement by Butler places both sex and gender into historical, social, and cultural categories; they refer to the ways of describing and understanding human bodies.

R.J. Stoller uses the term gender to refer to those tremendous areas of behaviour, feelings, thought and fantasies that are related to the sexes, but do not have primarily biological connotations. Sex has biological connotations and it belongs to realm of science, biology, and medicine. Stoller distinguishes between “gender role” and “gender identity” and seems to suggest that the gender role one plays in society may give little clue about his/her gender identity. Gender identity is something psychological; it is concerned with one’s psychological awareness of belonging to either of the two sexes. As one grows up, gender identity becomes much more complicated; one may realise oneself not only as a male, but masculine man, or an effeminate man or a man who fantasies being a woman (in Glover and Kaplan 2001: xx-xxi; & Moi 1999: 22). Stoller was the first person to use the term gender identity and attribute a proper meaning to it.

Reflecting upon the relationship between gender and language, the French philosopher Monique Wittig remarks that a revolution in language is very much important to remove gender inequalities and bring social changes. According to her, gender is an inherently singular term because linguistically the masculine not simply refers to the masculine. It becomes a general term. For example, the use of the words like “mankind” or “he” to refer to both men and women alike perpetuates a
universalising idiom which is denied to women and which makes men its sole possessors. She points to the personal pronouns such as I, we, he, she, you, and they as the markers that position us within the discourse of male and female. Wittig draws attention to the fact that language plays a crucial role in sustaining the imbalance between the categories of men and women (in Glover & Kaplan 2001: xxix-xxx). In the light of the above discussion it can be said that the concept of gender still remains biased towards women turning them into an underprivileged category. At the same time it is a fluid, problematic, and contested term which is always on the move, producing a variety of new meanings in different contexts.

Gendered violence
In my study, I have used the term “gendered violence” specifically to refer to the violent acts committed against women, primarily because of their socially constructed subordinate gender roles. Gendered violence can be considered as a form of “human violence”2 (a term used by Charner Perry) involving man and woman, in which the female is usually the victim. This arises from the unequal power relations between men and women under patriarchy that attributes power to men to subordinate women. In a sense patriarchy itself is a violent system creating as well as reinforcing the gender divide. Patriarchy works through different trajectories and criss-crossing power lines to subordinate women. Its main principle remains the same: man, being the socially privileged and powerful category, possess power to control and violate woman in all social relations.

In the preface to Gender and Violence: Interdisciplinary Perspective, L.L.O’toole and J.R.Schiffman define gender violence as any interpersonal, organisational or politically oriented violence against people due to their gender
identity, sexual orientation or location in the hierarchy of male dominated social systems such as families, military organisation or the labor force (1997: xii). Women are victims of gender-specific violence in almost every phase of their life span. Violence against them crosses racial, social-economic, cultural and ethnic boundaries and almost all women are victims of gender-specific violence. However, there are some variations in violence against women depending on their class, caste, region, and culture; their access to the economic and education systems and so on. Women experience violence either directly or have to live in continuous fear of it. They are deprived of using power; or if they use power to fight against violence, it becomes a form of resistance. Their subordinate position in society places them in counter-hegemonic subject positions because of which their fight against violence becomes a form of resistance against established norms. As a result, most women fail to combat violence effectively and learn to endure and accept it as a normal condition or their fate. In her essay on “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience” (1980), Adrienne Rich discusses how compulsory heterosexuality can be a form of controlling and suppressing women. According to her, patriarchal motherhood, economic exploitation, the nuclear family, compulsory heterosexuality -- these are some of the institutions by which women have been controlled traditionally (1993: 203-04).

The following table prepared WHO reveals the various forms of violence occurring in different phases of a woman’s life:
Violence against women in their life cycle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Life Cycle</th>
<th>Events and Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEFORE BIRTH</td>
<td>selective abortions, consequences of violence in pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARLY CHILDHOOD</td>
<td>female infanticide, selective negligence in care, physical, sexual and psychological violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATE CHILDHOOD</td>
<td>forced marriage of girls, mutilation of female genitalia, physical, sexual (incest) and psychological violence, child prostitution, pornography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD</td>
<td>incest, ‘courtship’ violence (date rape, acid attacks), sex due to economic necessity, violence by partner (until death), ‘dowry death’, rape, femicide, rape and forced pregnancy in war, sexual harassment at work, forced prostitution, pornography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLD AGE</td>
<td>murder or forced suicide of widows, physical, sexual and psychological violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (WHO, 1997 in Romito 2008: 13)

In many cases it is noticeable that child rape or marital rapes are not reported because of the fear of losing fame in society. The family becomes complicit in the victimisation of women, instead of providing safety and security for them. It has become a site for spreading domestic violence. According to Romito Patrizia, domestic violence involves a continuous series of diverse actions, characterised by a common purpose: that is to control one partner by the other through the use of psychological, economic, physical and sexual violence. Most often it is the woman who is controlled by the male partner. In this process she is not considered as a human being, rather as a thing to be controlled and used for any purposes (2008:17).

It has already been mentioned that women have to live with a continuous fear of violence, which limits their freedom and personal space. Discussing sexual violence, Liz Kelly uses the notion of continuum as it is present everywhere in the
form of different types of abuses. The threat of violence in public, flashing, obscene phone calls, pressurised sex, coercive sex, rape, sexual abuse of girl child, incest – these are some examples of sexual violence that violate women's personal space. She distinguishes between sexual harassment and sexual assault and says that sexual harassment includes a variable combination of visual, verbal and physical forms of abuse. Visual forms of harassment include – leering, menacing, staring and sexual gestures; verbal forms include – whistles, use of innuendo and gossip, sexual joking, propositioning and explicitly threatening remarks; physical forms include – unwanted proximity, touching, pinching, patting, deliberately brushing close and grabbing and so on. On the other hand, sexual assault always involves physical contact. It is a combination of sex and aggression. The harassments generally take place in work places and in the streets while assaults take place both inside and outside home by intimate partners, friends, and strangers. The term sexual harassment came into use from 1970s onwards, although it was in practice since the ancient past. In fact it is a form of control to sustain male dominance over women. Sexual violence creates psychological trauma in the victim and also contributes to institutionalise gender inequalities, as most of the victims of sexual harassment are women, not men (Kelly 1998: 191-202; Morgan 2001: 209-220).

Incest becomes a form of sexual violence when it takes place between a minor and an adult, most often at regular intervals. It usually involves a girl child who undergoes both sexual harassment and assault from adult strangers, acquaintances and relatives. Incest could be either interfamilial or intrafamilial. No systematic studies on incest were done until 1980 when its practice was discovered by the feminist scholars like Louise Armstrong, Florence Rush and Diana Russell to name a few. Another
Extreme form of violence against women is sexual murder. Many feminist have considered this form of violence as a political one, as this not only expresses individual anger and frustration, but also a collective, culturally sanctioned misogyny that helps to maintain the collective power of men. Sexual murder is committed out of a quest for transcendence on the part of the male which is already rooted in the cultural milieu of society. Sexual murder is the ultimate violation of the female sex and the body; the term sexual terrorism seems to be a fitting term to describe the effects of sexual murder on the female population (Cameron & Frazer 1998: 207-09).

Women are also victims of violence perpetrated against them by their intimate relationship partners. This is generally known as “intimate partner violence” in which women are more likely to be raped, beaten, stalked and even killed by intimate relationship partners rather than strangers. It continues in a cyclical pattern, and exerts deep psychological impact on the victim, apart from physical violence. The use of alcohol by the perpetrator also plays a significant role in intimate relationship partner violence (Mahoney et al, 2001: 143-155). Violence against older women, disability pornography, ethnic rapes, child pornography on internet, female genital mutilation -- are some other examples of violence experienced by women. Voyeurism is also a form of violence against women as it is a reminder of women’s status as an object of sex and also their lack of power.

Wolfgang and Ferracuti develop a notion called the ‘subculture of violence’ to refer to the violent acts committed by the young, lower class minority men against women. This perspective suggests that certain groups in society accept the use of certain forms of violence as normal and acceptable. Violence is encouraged and accepted as a way of life. In these subcultures, this variation in the use of violence
results from their adherence to a particular set of social and cultural values. This perspective argues that individuals who are part of the lower classes are more likely to subscribe to the use of violence than those from higher classes. Even some groups maintain values that justify wife beating as well (in Jasinki 2001: 14-15).

Many researches have associated the use of alcohol with the increase rate of violence against women. A survey shows that from 6% to 85% percent intimate assault involve the use of alcohol. Consumption of alcohol may lead to increase the number of cases of intimate violence such as wife beating and marital rape. But exclusive focus on alcohol as a causal factor diminishes the liability of the batterer and puts the blame totally on the effects of alcohol (Jasinki 2001:11).

Violence, Women and India – the Cultural Context

Violence against women is culture specific; it is influenced and shaped by the dominant cultural norms. Cultural and social factors are inevitably linked with the development and spread of gendered violence. Different society has different cultural outlook of viewing women; but the dominant outlook is still the patriarchal one. Under this patriarchal set up women are viewed as the subordinate other; the attitude which makes women easily vulnerable to various forms of violence. Of course there are variations in the types of violence women experience depending on the different social/cultural milieu to which they belong. Different cultures have their own specific ways of harassing women, although the issue is cross cultural and global. Justified in the name of culture, religion, and tradition, women across globe are subject to various forms of gendered violence.

Women in Indian society have been victims of exploitation, abuse, torture, and humiliation from the immemorial past. The notion of controlling and abusing the
woman can be dated back to the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In *Ramayana*, Sita is compelled to enter into the fire to prove her chastity while in *Mahabharata* Draupadi is compelled to undress herself in front of the *Kaurava* court. The contemporary relevance of these two stories cannot be ignored; such forms of violence against women still continue in the present under different terminologies. Although in the *Rig Vedic* period women enjoyed some kind of freedom, the situation changed in the later periods with the emergence of the caste system, *satidaha* (widow immolation), *purdah*, female infanticide and so on. These social constructs restrict women’s rights, mobility, and their freedom.

In the nineteenth century some social reformers like Rammohan Roy and Vidyasagar raised their voice of protest against *sati*, child marriage, denial of property rights, and advocated for education to women. However, this social issue became a political one with the advent of nationalism in the twentieth century, of which “female emancipation” was one of the goals. Nationalism answered the “woman question” within an ideological framework, which paradoxically reinforced the male/female, material/spiritual dichotomy. It allowed changes in the external conditions of women, but at the same time compelled them to maintain their essential spiritual (feminine) virtues (Chatterjee 2006: 239-244).

According Meera Kosambi, violence against women takes place both inside and outside home. Examples of gendered violence at home include – wife beating, widow immolation, murder, female foeticide, female infanticide, and many other forms of physical and mental harassment. Violence outside home generally takes the form of sexual assault. The view of women as sex object is so strong that sexual violence is directed against the female species as a whole; any female of any age is
likely to subject to sexual assault. Rape is the extreme form of sexual violence in which the victim is further victimised because of dichotomous patriarchal distinction between good woman and bad woman. She also points out how sexual exploitation of women often takes the form of forced prostitution; which is institutionalised through the phenomenon of "temple prostitution", where a girl (devadasi) is dedicated to the service a deity, only to be sexually abused (1994: 1-22).

Different manifestations of gendered violence are noticeable in Indian society, which not only include physical violence but also sexual, psychological and emotional abuse. Physical violence includes wife battering, coerced pregnancy, murder in the form of honour killing, stove burning, sati, female infanticide/foeticide, acid throwing, kidnapping, domestic, custodial and public assault etc. For example, wife battering figures in Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* while Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder* deals with some other forms of violence such as female foeticide, child sexual abuse, and the traumatic after effects such violent acts on the victim. Not only in India, but throughout the entire world there are many cultural practices which are gendered, and propagate violence against women.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is another form of physical violence done to a girl child in various parts of the world and India under the pretexts of culture and tradition. This practice, having no medical base, is concerned with removing the genital of a girl child in order to reduce her desire for sex, to ensure her virginity before marriage. Witch hunting is also rampant in India – another cultural practice which permits violence against women. Although men are also victims of witch hunting, women are more vulnerable to this form of violence. Superstition, greed, and jealousy are some of the causes of witch hunting in India. Dina Mehta’s play *Getting*
Away with Murder represents this violent practice along with other forms of violence against women. In many cases it is seen that economically independent single women are easy prey of this practice. Another act of violence against the girl child in India is the Devadasi system. According to this system young girls are offered to a deity in the form of marriage to a temple priest during the time of famine, drought etc. This system allows men to sexually abuse the girls. Poverty and cultural beliefs are the major reasons behind this system which is sanctioned by religion and culture.

Sexual violence against women includes rape, marital rape, custodial rape and gang rape, incest, public stripping, harassment through language, gesture, touch, trafficking and forced prostitution. Among these, the extreme form of sexual violence is rape which is not only a form of physical abuse, but it also inflicts deep and long lasting psychological pain in the victims; rape is an attack on the woman body and her selfhood. Incest and female child sexual abuse are represented in Thirty Days of September by Mahesh Dattani. Vijay Tendulkar’s Kamala deals with the issue of trafficking of women. His other play The Vultures is resonant with linguistic and physical violence against women. Manjula Padmanabhan’s play Lights Out deals with this issue of rape. All these plays will be analysed in detail in the Chapter - V of this dissertation.

Psychological and emotional abuse include some less overt forms of violence such as forced and child marriage, forced confinement and restriction on mobility, overwork, humiliation and other forms of verbal abuse. These different forms of violence occurring in different phases of a woman’s life, both inside and outside home, create a long lasting impact on her. Thus, violence has become an inescapable reality for women.
Another major cause encouraging domestic violence against women is the dowry system. In India, it is estimated that more than 5,000 women are killed every year by their husband or his family for reasons connected with an inadequate dowry (Romito 2008: 19). In a study made by Ranjana Kumari in Delhi shows that in a sample of 150 dowry victims one fourth were murdered or driven to commit suicide and more than half, that is 61.3% percent were thrown out of their husband’s house after a long drawn period of physical and mental harassment (in Karlekar 2008: 245).

In the Indian context, violence against woman can be exemplified as the result of patriarchal violence rather than simply male violence, as women are victimised by men as well as by other women for patriarchal ends. Sometimes violence is “self imposed” due to some normative religious and socio-cultural attitudes. Then it becomes an act of intrapersonal violence which includes: denial of food, sex determination test, negligence of illness, self-mutilation and many other self-destructing activities. Besides, the poor lower class women in India are more vulnerable to violence due to the prevalence of caste system. They suffer multiple layers of discriminations and violence because of their caste, class and gender. However, from 1960 onwards the discourse on violence against woman has been transformed from the private into the public domain. The women’s liberation movement of 1960s³ started creating awareness, knowledge, and resistance towards the cases of violence against women and child abuse. As feminism is chiefly motivated by the desire for transformation – transformation in the social positioning of women as a marginalised category, the emerging strategies of feminism can be instrumental in combating violence against women. The Indian feminists, as pointed out by Gitanjali Gangoli, look at violence as one of the mechanisms used to control and subjugate women and consider
such violence as a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women. Their campaign on violence is mainly directed towards domestic violence women encounter within the family; they thereby challenge the mainstream construction of family as a unit where the members get love and support (2007:99). The proliferation of women’s education and institutionalisation of Women’s Studies have also contributed to create awareness as well as encourage activism on this issue.

The issue of violence against women started to draw attention as a social problem only from the late 1960s and early 1970s; when the Indian feminists inspired by the western feminist raised their voice of protest against violence perpetrated by “patriarchal terrorism” (a term used in the feminist discourse to refer to the systematic use of violence by men against women). The institutionalisation of Women Studies as a discipline dealing with the study of women’s lives and experiences and inclusion of the topic of violence against women in various disciplines such as Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Public Health, and Law, have increased knowledge and awareness in this area. But more effective intervention, prevention, and resistance would become possible if the society’s discriminatory attitude towards women changes.

Representation of Violence

The concept of representation always implies an absence. In *The Concept of Representation*, Hanna F. Pitkin says that representation is a single, but highly complex concept covering a wide range of applications in varied contexts. It does not have an identifiable meaning. As the word’s etymology indicates, representation means re-present or making a present, in some sense, of something, which is nevertheless not present literally. In representation something which is not present
literally is considered to be present literally (1972:8-9). However, representation plays an important part in the production and dissemination of meaning.

Representation is a problematical concept and not free from political implications as well. Most often representation seems to be influenced by the interest of the dominant groups of society; an implicit operation of the power structures seems to influence the process of representation. Therefore, “who is representing whom” is an important factor in representation. Representation also seems to contain the elements of subjectivity like history writing which was till the late nineteenth century considered as an objective piece of writing. It was E.H. Carr who in *What is History?* points to the subjective elements involving history writing. The facts of history can only speak when the historian wants them to speak. The facts are dependent on the consciousness of the historian who selects, arranges, and interprets them with an imaginary understanding of the mind of the reader for whom he writes (1990:7-30). Likewise representation is also a matter of subjective selection, arrangement, and interpretation by the person who represents something. Representation can also be considered as a construct containing the elements of subjectivity, which is again another social and ideological construct. Therefore, representations hardly remain unaffected by the interest of the dominant groups and ideologies.

Language plays a very crucial role in representation. Language, as Stuart Hall points out, is central to the process of representation. Language operates as a representational system consisting of signs which stand for or represent to other people our ideas and feelings. We give things meaning by how we represent them through language. Here language is used in a wider sense which not only refers to spoken or written words, but also refers to all those cultural and social practices that
stand for or represent something. In this wider perspective, languages include—

musical languages, languages of the body, facial expressions, clothing, languages of the traffic lights etc. All these elements operating as signs construct and represent meaning. According to Hall, “thinking” and “feeling” are also systems of representation, in which our concepts and images represent in our mind the things which exist or may exist in the outside world. But at the same time meaning is like a dialogue - always only partially understood, always an unequal exchange (2003:1-5). As Wittgenstein says, our perception of a word and its meaning is context dependent; similarly our representation of the events via language is also influenced by our individual perception of them in a particular context.

Violence gets represented in art, literature and media. While representing violence, these means of representation have many choices regarding content selection and manner of representation. Representation of violence has double aspects—first, representation of violence could lead to more violence and second, it could be used to minimise the spread of violence. Instead of representing violence to avert the growth of violence; sometimes, the representation itself turns into a violent act encouraging more violence. Such representation sensationalises violent issues and carries negative impact. Hence, what is more important is the manner of representation; how the representation of violence can be used to prevent the growth of violence. It is this manner of representation that may generate adverse effect on the viewers, if it is not done with a conscious awareness to avoid negativity. Slavoj Žižek makes an interesting observation on how to approach a violent incident in order to represent it. In Violence Six Sideways Reflections, Žižek says:
A distinction needs to be made, as well, between truth (factual) and truthfulness: what renders a report on a raped woman (or any other narratives of trauma) truthful is its factual unreliability, its confusion and its inconsistencies. If the victim were able to report on her painful and humiliating experience in a clear manner, with all the data arranged in a consistent order, this very quality would make us suspicious of its truth...The only appropriate approach to my subject thus seems to be the one which permits variations on violence kept at a distance out of respect towards its victim. (2009:3)

While representing the spectacle of sexual violence against women in theatrical performance, Žižek’s idea of “truthful representation” can be a useful strategy to create awareness on this atrocious crime against women. Instead of a direct and overt representation of the truth of violence against women, the implementation of such a method of truthful representation can be an effective means for social change pertaining to women’s condition. He also brings into discussion Adorno’s distinction between realistic prose and impossible poetry, and says that in many instances realistic prose fails where poetry could be used to describe something which could not be addressed directly. Similarly music comes in when words fail to describe something. The poetical evocation of an unbearable atmosphere succeeds in alluding to it, instead of explicitly describing it. Therefore, truthful representation of violence can become more effective than the unconcealed description of violence. Žižek also emphasises the importance of learning the causes of violence and to adopt a practical means to solve this problem instead of indulging in fake urgency (2009:4-8).

When it comes to the question of representation of violence in media, the debate around the questions like whether the media representation of violent incidents has a decisive impact on people’s behaviour, do the media normalise, legitimise and encourage certain forms of violence as acceptable, still continues. Violence is represented both in electronic and print media such as newspapers, television, film,
advertising and internet etc. The representation of violence in media may also give rise to the so-called "copycat" crimes. Besides, the lack of social responsibility on the part of the media results in making the worst out of the violent issues. In the race of competition for fame and circulation, almost all media is engaged in publishing dramatic, made-up stories which attract readers to buy, watch, or listen to them. Sensational stories like that of sexual violence easily catch the attention of most people; both print and visual media make the best use of them to compete rivalry and increase publicity. Most of the reports on sexual violence seem to be gendered, fostering the myths and stereotypes about good women and bad women and supporting the patriarchal hegemony. Of course, at the same time, the viewer's individual perspective and moral values influence their perception of violence represented in media.

In *Violence and the Media*, Cynthia Carter and Keny Weaver discuss the biased and binary attitude adopted by almost all media in representing the events. Still, representation of violence in media is influenced by the white, heterosexual and patriarchal hegemonic power structures; freedom of speech in media actually upholds the privileging of the white, middle-class and the males by ensuring that their stories; their fantasies and desires are freely communicated around the globe. On the other hand, the non-whites, women, homosexuals, the working classes and children, do not have the same kind of control over the channels of communication and have limited access to the economic resources needed to promote their worldviews. Thus, the marginalisation of their perspectives is assured by privileging the dominant ideological discourses (2003:163). In that sense representation also turns out to be gendered, reinforcing the binary gender and other social distinctions.
Michael Taussig talks about how the colonisers used representation of violent stories to foster the image of terror that dominated the minds of both Indians and Whites. They spread the stories about violence perpetrated by the Indians portraying them as violent savages and phantoms. Such an imaginary representation of the Indians as violent terrorised the White minds, and they relentlessly killed the Indians to get rid of their perceived fear. By killing the Indians, the colonisers produced a sense of counter terror among the Indians. Such stories also conveyed the message that nothing could be extracted from the Indians without the threat of violence. Hence, the use of violence by the colonisers seemed appropriate for them (Taussig 2007: 503-21). From this discussion, it becomes obvious that specific representations of violence are used to assert domination by the powerful ones. In Tendulkar’s Kamala, the way the chief protagonist Kamala is represented and abused in the press conference by a group of male journalists is also an act of asserting the patriarchal power over women.

Kristine Stiles talks about the relationship between trauma and the representation of violence. Trauma is a psychological state of discomfort and stress resulting from agonising experiences such as war, rape, shock, incest, sexual abuse, concentration camp experiences and so on. These aforesaid heterogeneous traumatic experiences often lead to some psychological changes carrying homogeneous set of behaviours/symptoms such as loss of memory, repetition, guilt, isolation, detachments, inability to feel safe, reduced responsiveness etc. These symptoms may equally produce a heterogeneous body of images and actions that function as a homogeneous representation of trauma. And these cultural signs of trauma are highly visible in images and actions that occur within the conventional boundaries of visual art and in the practices and images of everyday life. According to her, “shaved heads”
and "marked bodies" are two sites that represent psychological trauma or violence (Stiles 2007: 522-38). In plays like *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *Thirty Days in September*, Mahesh Dattani represents such examples of trauma, experienced by some of the women characters and caused by their experience violence in the past.

At various times representation of gendered violence may lead to titillation. The dictionary meaning of titillation is to interest or excite somebody in a sexual way. It is another act of psychological abuse that a victim may experience. Titillation caused by the sights of sexual violence against women is something that can negatively affect the victim and enhance her pain. Titillation caused by the spectacle of violence can be the result of lack of empathy on the part of the viewers. The act of gazing by a beholder plays an important role in giving rise to titillation. Some people deliberately choose to watch spectacle of sexual violence and derive voyeuristic pleasure by watching such sights. This act of deriving deliberate pleasure by looking at the spectacle of violence against women supplements John Berger’s statement that “the way we see things is affected by what we know and what we believe; we only see what we look at and to look is an act of choice”(1972:8). The viewers’ preconceived and also the stereotyped notions concerning women as mere objects of sex affect their “looking” at women. Now a question arises here: how ethical is such representation of violence which gives rise to titillation and voyeurism. Examples of titillation and voyeurism are noticeable in some of the plays selected for analysis in this dissertation. For example, Kamala (the Adivasi woman in Vijay Tendulkar’s *Kamala*) in tattered clothes becomes an image that provides visual satisfaction to all those present in the press conference. She has to face many vulgar questions coming from the journalists which are nothing but sexually stimulating questions. In Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Lights Out* (Perf. Guwahati: 2007), Mohan and Bhaskar derive visual
satisfaction when witnessing a scene of gang rape. The play will be discussed in detail in chapter fifth of this dissertation.

Examples of titillation are also evident in the performance of a play called *Jatra* (perf. Guwahati: 2011) performed at Pragjyoti ITA Centre, Guwahati. A scene in the play shows a husband abusing his wife by using all possible means of violence on stage. In response to such spectacles of violence, the reaction on the part of the audience was shocking with audible sounds of whistles and laughter all around. This “cheerful” acceptance of sexual violence against women by the audience no doubt reveals their lack of concern for women; but at the same time it also refers back to the entire cultural set up that influences their perception of women; a cultural set up that allows such crimes against women.

The Indian films produced during the 1980s and 1990s also give emphasis on the issue of rape and its representation. A sensible documentation of the various forms of rape done to women is seen in the film *Bandit Queen* (1994) – a film based on the life Phoolan Devi (popularly known as bandit queen of India) directed by Shekhar Kapur. In the film, the chief protagonist Phoolan is raped several times by different people at different phases of her life. She first experiences marital rape in her conjugal relationship; later on she is raped in the police custody, and then is gang raped by a group of upper caste people. This is a daring representation of sexual violence against women by Shekhar Kapur. But for the shocking representation of certain rape scenes and nude portrayal of Phoolan in one scene, the film has been harshly criticised by some critics as there are possibilities that such representations may be titillating for some sections of the audience. But at the same time, the reality of violence against women shown in the film is something which one simply cannot deny. The same issue of a woman being gang raped is also represented by Manjula Padmanabhan in her play *Lights out.*
The victims of rape hardly get justice in India. Most cases of rape remain unreported. Even if such cases are reported, they remain pending. Many a time the convict is scot free. The prevailing notion of a “good woman” and “bad woman” affects the rape trial. A raped woman is necessarily a bad woman; or if a good/virtuous Indian woman is raped, she would not dare to report it publicly out of shame and respect towards society. This traditional and deep rooted attitude towards the rape victims figures in *Insaf Ka Tarazu* (1980): a film directed by B.R. Chopra. The film exposes the binary functioning of law along with its inability to punish the convict. Metaphorically speaking, the rape trial itself turns out to be another rape; this time it is a public rape. The trial exempts the convict Ramesh Gupta (played by Raj Babbar) and holds Bharati Devi (played by Zeenat Aman) responsible for being raped. The forced rape case was turned into a case of mutual sex and love. The rapist is turned into her lover; the victim is accused of blackmailing her lover. As Bharati is a model, rape means nothing to her. The court proves that she herself wants to be raped. Her defeat in the trial puts her life into more trouble. Social rejection and humiliation affect both Bharati and her sister. Finally, they are compelled to leave that place; they shift to a different place where her sister is raped by the same convict. The film not only documents rape – the extreme form of sexual violence against women; but also the subsequent psychological trauma caused by sexual violence. The rape trial here upholds the dominant cultural fantasies about a bad woman: a woman who wants to be raped. It is seen that during the 1980s many films documented rape. Such films no doubt represented the reality of sexual violence, but at the same time the titillating content of such representations to a certain section of viewers cannot be ignored. The two rape scenes in the film are indeed shocking. Nevertheless, the film became a box office hit satisfying the needs of Indian public/popular imagination.
Endnotes

1 See the preface (p.vii- viii) in Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory, ed. by Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (London: Routledge, 1996).

2 According to Charner Perry violence involves harmful forces which could be either natural or human forces. Perry distinguishes between natural violence and human violence and arrives at the conclusion that natural violence is to some extent self-limiting whereas human violence is self expanding producing counter violence (“Violence - Visible and Invisible.” Ethics. 81 (October, 1970): p.7-9.

3 The Women’s liberation movement began formally in the 1960 and became influential in various parts of the world. This was also known as the second wave of feminism, which initiated a formal protest against women’s lack of equality in the areas like family, sexuality, and workplace. Earlier, the first wave of feminism concentrated on women’s equal participation in the political arena, demanding the right to vote for women. But long before the emergence of these organized movements, women started questioning their subjected position and demanded a change in their social position.

4 The phrase copy cat crime refers to those crimes which are inspired by the previous crimes generally reported by media in a sensational manner. The sensational representation of violence in media encourages some people to indulge in similar violent acts, giving rise to copy cat crimes in society.
Works cited


