Chapter-II

POSITION OF EDUCATED WOMEN IN *SILENCE!* *THE COURT IS IN SESSION AND KANYADAAN*
CHAPTER TWO
POSITION OF EDUCATED WOMEN IN SILENCE!
THE COURT IS IN SESSION AND KANYADAAN

In mankind's history, patriarchy being entrenched deeply and being all-pervasive, men have always thought themselves to be the centre of the universe and expected what Simone de Beauvoir calls 'the other sex' to fall in line and accept male domination to be natural and even desirable. It is only after feminism came into its own that 'the other sex's' voice is being heard. The 'gaps' and 'silences' in earlier discourses in literature are being filled up with demands for 'space' and articulation of female desire is being made.

In Vijay Tendulkar's plays, men are steeped in patriarchy. It is a question of only the degree as to what extent they suppress women. Sakharam in Sakharam Binder, Nana and Ghashiram in Ghashiram Kotwal, Arun Athavale and Nath Devalikar in Kanyadaan, Ramakant, Umakant and Papa in The Vultures, most of the male characters in Silence! The Court is in Session! are totally prejudiced against women and believe in patriarchy which justifies women to be suppressed. Earlier a few sacrosanct tenets of patriarchy meant that women had to be kept at home and their domain was in the kitchen and the outside world belonged to men. Even in the modern world, women have only gained limited freedom. When one looks critically at the plight of women today in the context of patriarchal social milieu, "it seems the fairer sex is fair only on paper."1 Though the society makes tall claims of evolution, "it seems to be in no mood to give women equal share"2 in real life. Highlighting the subjugation of women in Indian society, J.M. Waghmare aptly comments: "Women have been standing at the
crossroads of history for centuries with tears in their eyes and milk in their breasts. Ours is man-centered world."³ Most of Tendulkar's plays are set in modern contemporary world where also women get a raw deal at the hands of men. It is ironic that women, considered as the weaker sex, are never considered too weak to do back-breaking house-chores. Men expect women to be sexually pure, full of compassion and a talent for nurturance. According to Mary Ann Ferguson, "In every age women have been seen primarily as mother, wife, mistress, sex-object, their role in relationship to man."⁴ Woman's subjugated social status is, thus, traditionally accepted in Indian male-dominated society.

In most of his plays, Tendulkar took on taboo theme of various forms of exploitation and oppression suffered by women in the patriarchal set-up. As characters, his women always occupy "a unique position among the oppressed sections of mankind."⁵ It is in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kanyadaan* that the playwright's creative genius explores the precarious position of young educated women in a middle-class male-dominated tradition bound Indian society. Dealing with the gender biases, men-women relationship and caste system, Tendulkar, in these plays, projects "women as victims"⁶ and raises several questions about the "vulnerable position of women"⁷ in patriarchy. The central female characters, Leela Benare and Jyoti, in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kanyadaan* respectively represent the modern, educated and sophisticated ladies of the contemporary Indian society. Both these women symbolize injustice against women and their oppression and dispossession in patriarchy. The dangers inherent in making independent decisions by educated women are clearly highlighted in these plays. The way these educated women
characters suffer in their lives makes it clear that mere formal education has failed to solve the problems of women in Indian society.

Silence! The Court is in Session, a translation of Vijay Tendulkar’s representative Marathi play, Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe, has proved to be a milestone not only in his career as a representative but also in the history of Marathi theatre. With the production of this remarkable play, Tendulkar arrived at the centre stage and became the forerunner of modern Indian stage. It was a journey from the contemporary provincial Marathi stage to the modern Indian theatre as one of the pioneers of experiment theatre. It is in Silence! The Court is in Session that Tendulkar’s concern with the “problems a woman faces” and “the extent of trauma which she undergoes” in the male-dominated society finds its first full-length treatment. Already known as ‘the angry young man’ of Marathi theatre, Tendulkar emerged with this play “as a rebel against the established values of fundamentally orthodox society.”

The playwright shocks his conventional readers by forcefully exposing the hollowness of the middle-class moralities about love and marriage.

The play is about the pathetic position of a young educated middle-class woman, Leela Benare, in the male-dominated Indian world. Making ample use of satire, irony, pathos and even mock-element, Tendulkar exposes the hypocrisy and cruelty of the males towards helpless female, Miss Benare, a teacher by profession, and an active member of an amateur theatre group. The other members of this theatre group are Mrs. Kashikar, Balu Rokde, Sukhatme Ponkshe, Karnik, Professor Damle and Rawte. They all belong to urban middle class society of Bombay, a class which is supposed to uphold the conventional social morality. The play shows brilliantly how men like Kashikar, Sukhatme and others “gang up” against Benare and
persecute her for being nonconformist. The males' hostility points accusing fingers at Leela Benare and puts her in the dock in a mock-court. In patriarchy, young males are taught to be aggressive since childhood while females are taught to be passive and docile. Leela Benare is neither passive nor docile. She is bubbly, full of life, independent and not at all afraid of the men around her. She is different from the typical, traditional Indian woman. Men around her dislike her frank and open nature and behaviour. They push her towards a death-like situation but she survives because of a strong desire for her unborn 'son.' It is ironic that even after suffering at the hands of the male chauvinists around her, she still hankers for a 'son.' This is a patriarchal prejudice instilled in the minds of females.

As the curtain rises, Leela Benare and Samant, a local chap, are found conversing. Benare gets one of her fingers caught in the latch of the door but she is not bothered. They are waiting for the rest of the cast to arrive as Benare belongs to an amateur group of actors who perform plays periodically. There is to be a performance later at night. Leela Benare is in a complete control of the situation. She is full of spirits and feels "wonderful" and "marvellous". A school teacher by profession, it seems, she does not have a care in the world. She has left everyone behind. Samant says: "You do set a very lively pace, very lively" (p. 55). She straight away and frankly tells Samant that she likes him very much: "Let's leave everyone behind and go somewhere far, far away---with you"(p.55). She even makes an excuse to get closer to him. Her frank overtures embarrass Samant.

Benare, witty and vivacious, is quite proud of her being an efficient teacher and she boasts: "My class is scared stiff of me" (p. 58). But ironically she doesn't know that she is to be put in the dock soon
and be reprimanded severely again and again. She thinks that children are better than adults as “they don’t scratch you till you bleed, then run away like cowards” (p.57). It seems to be a kind of premonition because this is exactly what is going to happen to her. The other actors arrive here are males except Mrs Kashikar. Benare looks defiant and spirited in the beginning of the play: “My life is my own… My will is my own. My wishes are my own. No one can kill those—no one. I will do what I like with my life!” (p.158). About the character of Benare, Shubha Tiwari comments:

The problem with Leela Benare is that she is too much of a woman. She is sexually alive. She needs to fulfill her desires. And above everything else, she is not ashamed of her instincts. She is not submissive. She does not fit into the wrapper society has so meticulously prepared for its women over centuries of patriarchal thinking.12

She will soon discover that a woman’s life, her wishes and her will are not hers at all. Males can be nasty and they can make it their business to poke their noses into others’ affairs and they do it very determinedly in this play.

Benare has had a dig even at Professor Damle with whom she has had a love-affair and who is presently absent. She has been indulging in childish pranks; she sticks out her tongue; makes mischievous remarks and personal comments; teases and mimics others; laughing heartily and she has not spared a single person. Ironically, all this is going to boomerang on her very shortly. Shubha Tiwari observes: “Like the playwright himself, Benare is also very vocal, very open and frank in her attack on male chauvinism and false concepts of masculinity. To pay her back in the same coin, the actors plan to expose and humiliate her through a mock trial. She gets into the trap.”13
Sukhatme, one of the actors, suggests that since there is plenty of time for the actual play to begin, a mock-trial should be held to pass time. The male group decides to put Benare in the dock. This is done in her absence as she has gone to the wash-room. She is to be charged with the section 302 of the Indian Penal Code, as her crime being infanticide. Benare is stunned at the 'charge' levelled against her but pleads not guilty: “I couldn’t even kill a common cockroach.... How could I kill a new-born child?” (p. 79). However, Sukhatme, the counsel for the prosecution, gets up to say that the charge is a most terrible one:

Motherhood is a sacred thing....Motherhood is pure. Moreover, there is a great—er—a great nobility in our concept of motherhood. We have acknowledged women as the mother of mankind. Our culture enjoins us to perpetual worship of her. ‘Be thy mother as a God’ is what we teach our children from infancy. There is great responsibility devolving upon a mother. She weaves a magic circle with her whole existence in order to protect and preserve her little one. (p. 79)

But these are empty words on the part of the male, for soon the ‘team spirit’ takes over and the group of males, for whom it is a game as they put it later on. They decide to teach the teacher a lesson, she will not forget in a hurry. Men come and take the oath and accuse her of all kinds of misdemeanours. Ponkshe says: “She runs after men too much” (p.81). Rokde says that he saw Benare in Damle’s room one day late at night. Samant makes up a story about how Professor Damle refused to help Benare when she told him that she was pregnant. Benare gets up, her eyes suddenly fill with tears. Apparently the fiction is perilously close to truth. She tries to go out but the bolt is stuck and the door gets locked from outside. ‘A peculiar joy’ begins to show on the faces of all males. ‘Perverse excitement’ is what makes them decide that the trial should continue and the accused should be put in the dock again. Quite
obviously, Benare becomes “an unwitting target in the cruel game being played on her.”

Veena Noble Dass rightly observes that “trapped too murderously by the vulture males around her....Miss Benare who is on the offensive at the beginning finds herself trapped at the close of the play.”

Any sensible person would protest at the way Benare is bombarded with question--while the males enjoy at her expense--her silence is taken as assent to her various ‘crimes.’ They know where to needle her so that it would hurt most. Since ‘prisoner Benare’s age’ is supposed to be thirty four, the ‘learned’ judge Mr. Kashikar says: “What I say is, our society should revive the old custom of child marriage. Marry off the girls before puberty. All this promiscuity will come to a full stop. If anyone has ruined our society, it’s Agarkar and Dhondo Keshav Karve” (p. 98).

Mrs. Kashikar is of the opinion that promiscuity has become widespread in modern society because women have started earning living. This remark is absolutely anti-feministic, since feminists have been advocating economic independence for females, if they are to be rid of patriarchal oppressions. The prisoner’s supposed pleading to Rokde to marry her even when she is pregnant by another man, and her ‘depravity’ in falling in love with her maternal uncle at the age of fifteen, make the lawyer Sukhatme give his valuable comment: “The present conduct of the accused is totally licentious. We know that. But it now seems that her past, too, is smeared in sin” (p. 111). Benare tries to go out but Mrs Kashikar “grasps her and forces her back to the dock. Banare’s persecutors, including Mrs. Kashikar would not let her escape under any circumstances.
The Judge, Mr. Kashikar himself is too eager to break the tradition and joins the fray, accusing Benare. He stands in the witness-box and says he knows the accused too well and that she is “a sinful canker on the body of society--that’s my honest opinion of these grown up unmarried girls” (p. 112).

Earlier when Sukhatme asks Ponkshe: “Does the accused have a particularly close relationship with any man, married or unmarried?” (p. 82). Benare flippantly answers: “Yes, with the counsel for the prosecution himself! And with the judge! To say nothing of Ponkshe, Balu here or Karnik” (p. 82). Rokde, Ponkshe, Karnik and others have spoken against her. Mr. Kashikar in the witness box, to give evidence at one stage, informs everybody that Nana Saheb Shinde, the Chairman of the education society of the school, where Benare teaches, has issued dismissal orders on the grounds of her supposed immoral conduct. Shocked, Miss Benare tries to swallow poison from the Tik-20 bottle that she is carrying in her purse but the others stop her. Sukhatme, seems to be tired and exhausted, calls Professor Damle, Nanasaheb Shinde and Rawte to speak in support of the accused prisoner knowing fully well that all of them are absent. His request to cross-examine the witness for the prosecution is turned down by the judge.

Leela Benare’s defence is expressed in a soliloquy while the court ‘freezes’. This is a dramatic device used by Tendulkar to let Benare express her innermost thoughts. She is flabbergasted at her dismissal from her job. How can they dismiss her from her job when she has consistently been an excellent teacher? At the innocent age of fourteen, if she committed a ‘sin’ by having a relationship with her maternal uncle who kept on pursuing her, it was pure love as far as she was concerned. She even wanted to get married to him. But the ‘brave’ man turned tail
and fled. He was only interested in her body. She says she wanted to smash the face of her gutless lover and then spit on it. As a grown-up woman, she repeats the same mistake by falling in love with a married man with five children Professor Damle. She offers her body on the altar of her worship, with the same consequences. Only this time she gets pregnant too. The lover abandons her once again to her fate. It is not only strange but also shocking that our society never blames the men, here older and supposedly wiser males. Not a word of censure is uttered by a single character against the males. It is always, always the woman who is put in the dock.

The judge in his final verdict is most severe: the child in Leela Benare’s womb must be destroyed. Strangely the charge and the verdict are the same. The game has come to an end. Life for Leela Benare would never be the same again. At the end and of the play, her position is reflected in the posture: “She sits down, half fainting. Then in paroxysms of torment, she collapses with her head on the table, motionless. Stifled sobs come from her” (p. 119). This traumatic evening, which has just been a game to others, but it would be like a never-healing ulcer for her. Everybody around her makes hypocritical ‘sympathetic’ comments but it is only Samant who really feels sorry for her and places the green cloth parrot (bought for his nephew) in front of Benare. The symbolic significance of the parrot and the heart-rending lullaby sung by Benare leaves a strong impact on readers:

The Parrot to the sparrow said,
‘Why, oh why, are your eyes so red?’
‘Oh, my dear friend, What shall I say?
Someone has stolen my nest away.’
Sparrow, sparrow, poor little sparrow...
‘Oh, brother crow, oh, brother crow,
Were you there? Did you see it go?’
‘No, I don’t know. I didn’t see.
What are your troubles to do with me?’
O sparrow, sparrow, poor little sparrow.(p.121)

If there is a play, where a lone and defenceless female is seen as hounded by males, it has to be *Silence! The Court is in Session*. Leela Benare becomes a victim of male persecution and is hounded relentlessly in a mock-trial because all the actors want to while away time before the actual performance takes place. And for these males no ‘better’ way is visible than torturing a helpless female. Benare’s private life, her affairs with Damle and the consequent pregnancy—this is the crime that she is accused of. The males like Sukhtme, Mr. Kashikar, Ponkshe, Karnik and Rokde are “the frustrated flops of the society who are lashing out their failure in an assault on a young woman.”16 Mr. Kashikar has no children, hence he is frustrated. Rokde is “an expert on the law. He is such an authority on the subject, even a desperate client won’t go anywhere near him! He just sits alone in the barristers’ room at court, swatting flies with legal precedents!” (p. 59) as Benare puts it. Ponkshe is an inter-science failed student. Sukhatme is a bad lawyer and Karnik is an unsuccessful actor. So “to cover up their frustration,” these men “perpetuate violence”17 against Benare by making her accused of infanticide in a mock-trial. Benare falls a victim to “the false male ego of superiority”18 of her co-actors. According to Sukhatme “when there is a woman in the dock, the case does have a different complexion...” (p. 73).

Leela Benare is charged under section 302 of the Indian Penal Code of the crime of infanticide. The Psychological violence, unleashed
by the males is born out of the males’ jealousy of this lively school teacher who dares to speak: “My private life is my own business. I’ll decide what to do with myself; everyone should be able to! That can’t be anyone else’s business...” (p. 117). How dare a female say such things in a patriarchy where it is the prerogative of only a male? The male responsible for landing Miss Benare in a physical and emotional mess is a coward: “And we have an intellectual too. That means someone who prides himself on his book learning. But when there is a real-life problem, away he runs! Hides his head. He’s not here today. Won’t be coming either. He wouldn’t dare!” (p. 60). The whole court ‘freezes’ as these words are spoken. These shifts between illusion and reality further reinforce the helplessness of a female in this naturalistic drama where Tendulkar highlights the relationship between an individual and society.

The sadist, hypocritical, double-standard, male gang enjoys itself thoroughly at the expense of the vulnerable position of a female. Her valiant defence of her conduct is ignored and drowned in the noise of judge’s order of ‘Silence!’ Her soliloquies, including the monologue at the end, are words of self-justification which would probably fall on deaf ears of the males, if spoken amidst them. Arundhati Banerjee, the noted critic, aptly remarks: “Benare’s monologue is reminiscent of Nora’s declaration of independence but lacks the note of protest that characterizes the speech of Ibsen’s heroine. It’s more a self justification than an attack on society’s hypocrisies. It is poignant, sensitive and highlights the vulnerability of women in our society.” Patriarchy has all the cards in its own hands. The judiciary even in a mock-trial is quite anti-woman and declares Miss Benare to be guilty and orders that the child in her womb must be destroyed. “The cup of her crime is now full”
(p. 118), says the male judge and goes on to say in his judgement, part of which could well be the charter for patriarchy:

The crimes you have committed are most terrible. There is no forgiveness for them. Your sin must be expiated. Irresponsibility must be chained down. Social customs, after all, are of supreme importance. Marriage is the very foundation of our society’s stability. Motherhood must be sacred and pure. This court takes a very serious view of your attempt to dynamite all this. It is the firm opinion of this court that your behaviour puts you beyond mercy. And, what is more, the arrogance with which you conducted yourself in society having done all these things, that arrogance is the most unforgivable thing of all. Criminals and sinners should know their place. No momento of your sin should remain for future generations. Therefore this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed. (pp. 118-119)

The male Professor Damle, of course, goes scot-free. Not even a word of censure is mentioned. The society, the judiciary and the laws are all patriarchal, biased and firmly anti-women, where a female is always at the receiving end. Veena Noble Dass very pertinently opines:

A young woman belonging to a middle class society in our country is denied the privilege of living a decent life, of becoming a mother, not that she did not want to become one, but the men, specially the so-called intellectual Prof. Damle, after seducing her and using her does not come forward to protect her. An extreme form of powerlessness can be for a woman the denial to bear a child....It is sometimes rationalized as the ‘masculine’ way of dealing with woman’s sexuality....The man responsible for the child is himself a coward, because he is already married, and does not want to break the social norms by getting involved with an unmarried woman. So he leaves her at the cross roads, lets her face the cruel mob that is exploiting her. But the pity is Benare is seeking shelter and love from these very cruel men. As such the play is a satire against a male dominated society which is concerned about middle class morality.20
The lone female in this gang is a totally brain-washed woman, Mrs. Kashikar in contrast to the independent Miss Benare. Mrs. Kashikar, parrot-like, repeats the accusations and is jealous of the women who “get everything without marrying. They just want comfort. They couldn’t care less about responsibility!” (p.99).

Earlier, Kashikar, the nominated judge, offers the atrocious suggestion that the custom of child marriage should be revived: “What I say is, our society should revive the old custom of child marriage. Marry off the girls before puberty. All this promiscuity will come to a full stop. If anyone has ruined our society, it’s Agarkar and Dhondo Keshav Karve” (p. 98). And Sukhatme charges Miss Benare of making a heinous blot on the sacred brow of motherhood:

I mean unmarried motherhood....The accused has plotted to dynamite the very roots of our tradition, our pride in ourselves, our culture and our religion....No allowance must be made because the accused is a woman. Woman bears the grave responsibility of building up the high values of society. ‘Na stri swatantryamarhati.’ ‘Woman is not fit for independence’....That’s the rule laid down for us by tradition....Miss Benare is not fit for independence.’ With the urgent plea that the court should show no mercy to the accused, but give her the greatest and severest punishment for her terrible crime, I close the argument for the prosecution. (p. 115)

Even if it is a mock-trial, these comments smack of male self-importance and negation and rejection of the ‘other sex’s’ right of independence to live her life as she desires. Vijay Kumar Sinha aptly remarks: “There is a constant conflict in the play between the social taboo of male superiority and a woman’s assertion of her individuality.”

Tendulkar’s play Silence! The Court is in Session!, which is in the naturalistic mode, deals with the theme of the predicament of an
individual in relation to society. If the individual happens to be a helpless woman literally locked inside a hall with a group of frustrated males and a totally brain-washed woman bent upon humiliating, persecuting and inflicting psychological violence upon her, the treatment meted out to her clearly shows the writer's severe indictment of patriarchal oppression in society. The males in the play apparently "enjoy" torturing the school teacher and in the end not just pass a judgement but sentence her too. Fate has been extremely unkind to her in matters of the heart as her lovers have taken advantage of her to have physical relations but refuse to take responsibility for their actions. The brave teacher's indomitable spirit has made her face the harsh realities of life but she would have never dreamt that her fellow actors in a play would pounce on her at the first opportunity and put her in the dock for committing the crime of 'unmarried motherhood.' Tendulkar's basic premise in his plays is the thematic concern. In his plays, all men are exploiters of women under the garb of education and liberalism. Benare's uncle had physical relations with her when she was just fourteen years old. Professor Damle makes her pregnant. Sukhatme, the lawyer, argues in the mock-trial to substantiate the case against her. Kashikar, the judge, gives the verdict. Most of the other men present, help in building a case against her, giving trivial bits of information. She is dismissed from her job by Nanasaheb Shinde. Her fault was that she trusted the men in her life. Tendulkar makes the sparrow, 'poor little sparrow', whose nest is stolen away, moan softly at the end of the play, making it clear that his total sympathy is with the shattered woman, Benare.

*Silence! The Court is in Session* has a number of characters---both major and minor ones---all lined up against the heroine in joint
opposition to make the plot move further. Samant is the local chap, who unlocks the hall doors and is keenly looking forward to seeing the mock-law-court trial that night by The Sonar Moti Tenement Progressive Association, Bombay. Benare tries to come too close to him but Samant is too innocent and feels uncomfortable because of Benare’s overtures.

Mrs. and Mr. Kashikar are nicknamed by Benare as ‘Mr. Prime Objective’ and ‘Mrs Hand-that-Rocks-the-Cradle’ type, cruelly making fun of the fact that they have no children. They have brought up a young boy, Balu Rokde, another minor character, who is inter-failed and is now practising law but with hardly any law practice. He is to be a great barrister in today’s Mock-Law Court’s general factotum Rokde, lawyer Sukhatme, science student, Ponkshe, and experimental theatre actor, Karnik. Benare scolds Rokde like a school teacher: “Rokde! This is a bad habit” (p.62). Sukhatme calls himself “a lawyer to the marrow” (p.68) and offers to play two parts, the prosecuting counsel and also the counsel for the accused as Professor Damle has not arrived. As the fourth witness is down with flu, Samant is roped in to be the fourth witness. Benare suggests that since “Atomic Weapons” (p.60) trial has been done seven times, something new should be done. It is Sukhatme who puts forward the idea that a performance of “a new and imaginary case against someone” (p.71) should be enacted, as is done in the court of law sometimes to pass the time. Mrs. Kashikar’s suggestion is that the accused should be different. Since Benare is in the washroom, she is suggested as the accused. Sukhatme says: “There is not much difference between one trial and another. But when there’s a woman in the dock, the case does have a different complexion. That’s true. That’s my experience” (p.73). Since according to Kashikar, it should be a charge with social significance, Benare is to be accused of the crime of infanticide under Section 302 of the IPC. Sukhatme further makes it
clear to Benare: "Why are you so grave all of a sudden? After all, it's a game. Just a game, that's all. Why are you so serious?" (p.75). Supporting Sukhatme, Karnik tells Benare: "That crime itself is imaginary....It's all imaginary...that's what it is" (p.90). And Ponkshe confirms that "Only the accused is real!" (p.90).

It is the minor characters who together constitute a formidable opposition to lay a siege on Benare. Kashikar is the judge, Sukhatme the lawyer and others act as witnesses. Taking it as a game, the heroine's tormentors begin the game with Samant being an observer. The game soon turns into a hunt. "The latent sadism of the characters... surfaces during the process of the trial." The sadists persecuting a helpless woman, literally a prisoner as the bolt has slipped from outside and the hall doors will open only from outside, have no pity. Sukhatme, the bad lawyer, Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar the childless couple, the failed scientist Ponkshe, the failed actor Karnik and Rokde who cannot lead an independent life get wicked pleasure in their nefarious game against Benare. Wadiker rightly observes: "The playwright successfully manages to bring out their sadistic attitude through their dialogues, gestures, and mannerisms."

It is Mrs. Kashikar who cajoles, persuades, and almost forces Rokde to reveal details about the 'compromising situation' in which he found the accused with Professor Damle. It is a woman who starts the game but it is the men who pursue the arguments relentlessly. Rokde is furious at Benare's mocking words, "speak Balu speak.A-B-C-" (p.81). Rokde reveals details about Benare being in Damle’s room one night. Then Samant makes up an imaginary story about a tense scene between Damle and Benare because Damle reportedly has refused to marry her
and she says that two lives would be lost—hers and that of their unborn baby.

For Kashikar, it has all become "unexpectedly enjoyable" (p. 94). In Act three, the real entrapment starts. Sukhatme’s eyes gleam with perverse excitement. Kashikar the judge keeps picking his ear. Mrs. Kashikar starts pulling Benare along forcibly. Sukhatme prays to God before the beginning of the new case. Benare refuses to cooperate but they are all determined to torture her. Mrs. Kashikar makes unkind comments about Benare’s age. Her damning evidence against Benare is about her being free with men, laughing loudly, holding Rokde’s hands in the dark. Women themselves steeped in centuries of patriarchal indoctrination—here it is Mrs. Kashikar—are no less in perpetuating patriarchal strictures. Apparently, laughing loudly is something to be frowned upon and condemned.

Rokde gives his evidence and now there is a rush as these minor characters are vying to give evidence. Ponkshe says: “Call me as a witness! Call me now!...Just call me!” (p. 103). Ponkshe reveals that Benare keeps a bottle of Tik-20, the well-known popular bed-bug poison, always in her purse. He also claims that Benare held a meeting in a family room in a restaurant where she expressed her desire to marry him as she was pregnant. As this is related, there is all round sensation. Meanwhile Benare sits like “a block of stone, drained of colour and totally desolate” (p. 105). As is revealed, it is Damle’s child. Ponkshe quotes Benare and tells that “she worshipped that man’s intellect. But all he understood was her body” (p. 108). Ponkshe further adds that Benare fell at his feet but when he refused to marry her, she cried that it was a joke, all the time laughing but there were tears in her eyes. Then it is Karnik’s turn to reveal with great glee that Benare has previously
tried to commit suicide, as at the age of fourteen, she fell in love with her maternal uncle and had to face disappointment. It is like a bombshell. In other words, Kashikar says, "Just one step away from total depravity" (p.111). The total depravity, the immoral and sinful relationship makes everyone feel dumb-founded and enraged. As a social worker, Kashikar says, he met Nanasaheb Shinde from whom he came to know that Benare has been dismissed. He quotes Nanasaheb. "It is a sin to be pregnant before marriage. It would be still more immoral to let such a woman teach, in such a condition. There is no alternative—this woman must be dismissed" (p.113). Having said this, Nanasaheb instructed, "Send the order for my signature this very day!" (p.113). Then as Benare has nothing to say, Kashikar as judge, pronounces her guilty and says that as punishment, the child in her womb should be destroyed. It is interesting to note that these minor characters all mouthing patriarchal platitudes have not a single word against the maternal uncle and Professor Damle, the villainous men in her life, rather it is the woman who is put in the dock and accused of infanticide. Strangely she is accused of infanticide and her punishment is also the same. The male escapes everything---censure, ridicule or punishment. These are not for him---both men had their desires fulfilled and it is Leela Benare who has to face the music. The society is "pre-eminently male-biased."  

Eventually, all is over, all her tormentors show sympathy and hypocritical care for her well-being. Benare is completely shattered but they have had their fun. Mrs. Kashikar says: "How sensitive the child is!" (p. 120). Karnik says: "Benare, come on, get up" (p. 120). Ponkshe asks Semant to arrange for some tea. Only Sukhatme says disinterestedly: "Just a game! What else? A game. That's all" (p. 120).
It is like pretending to apply balm after hurting someone very badly. Would Benare ever forget this evening and would her relationship with these people remain the same? Not likely. Not likely at all. Vijay Tendulkar’s technique of a ‘play within a play’ “exposes the cruel nature inherent in our male dominated society. The intellectual who is responsible for Benare’s humiliating condition goes unscathed and unnoticed, but she is deposed literally naked in front of these men. The very men who “give lectures on the dignity of women and motherhood, are responsible for inflicting shame and indignity on her.”

In Tendulkar’s *Silence! The Court is in Session*, the persecution of Benare is on a psychological level, and there are no abuses as such hurled against her as directed against Laxmi in *Sakharam Binder*. There are generalisations such as women are not fit for independence. Benare’s supposed holding of Rokde’s hand is termed as a sinful deed by Sukhatme. Mrs. Kashikar’s pronouncements on Benare are ridiculous, to say the least. Mrs. Kashikar, a woman herself, is a person thoroughly brainwashed by patriarchal platitudes and has this to say about Benare: “Just look at the way she behaves. I don’t like to say anything since she’s one of us. Should there be no limit to how freely a woman can behave with a man? An unmarried woman? No matter how well she knows him? Look, how loudly she laughs! How she sings, dances, cracks jokes! And wandering alone with how many men, day in and day out!” The whole statement would have been laughable except that Mrs. Kashikar is dead serious in disapproving of Benare’s behaviour. Ironically, in a society, reformist movements are launched to get independence for women from the age-old shackles and when such changes take place, women like Mrs. Kashikar are there to condemn a
woman full of life like Benare. Benare's very right to privacy is trampled upon.

*Silence! The Court is in Session* depicts the tragedy of Miss Benare, “a modern educated woman” who is “capable of protecting herself, and her body” in a male-dominated society. Tendulkar brilliantly dissects and shows the sick psyche of male chauvinists of urban India. Shubha Tiwari aptly observes: “The double standards are sickening. On one hand there is this woman who is trying to hold her head high in the face of social humiliation. On the other hand, there are these sadistic members of the drama company whose only pleasure lies in exposing, torturing and laughing at the cornered woman.”

Tendulkar does not let Benare kill herself or feel shy about the whole episode but makes her fight till the end. She is a powerful woman and never cares for society or its trivial hypocritical norms. Silence is imposed upon her by the authorities but she breaks her “forced silence” at last. The play brings out the hypocrisy of the society that “excuses men and persecutes women” for the same offence.

The play *Kanyadaan* is perhaps supposed to be the most controversial of Tendulkar’s plays. It is criticized as “anti-Dalit” and has provoked a great deal of anger and protest. In fact, Sahilaja B. Wadikar finds the play to be a commentary on “the conflict between the upper and the lower class people” in the hierarchical structure of Indian society. V.M. Madge observes that the play does throw light on “the Dalit-Brahmin relationship.” This tendency of the critics is represented by critics like N.S. Dharan when he asserts that the play “dwells on an extremely sensitive, social and political issue, namely, the conflict between upper castes and dalits, a phenomenon still rampantly prevalent in several parts of India.” It is clear that these critics tend to have a very
partial view of the playwright’s concern and have tried to analyze the theme of the play in terms of stereotyped mould of class war. As a result of this approach, the critics have failed to recognize Tendulkar’s basic commitment to the humanistic principles of sympathy and justice in general and gender equality in particular. Through matrimonial relationships, the playwright, very sensitively, locates family and gender relations in the larger context of “the caste conflict.” The social clash and the battle of sexes become one and inseparable in the complex framework of personal relationships of husband and wife.

A close examination of the play, Kanyadaan reveals that Tendulkar is not concerned only with the presentation of caste-distinctions in the contemporary society; rather he goes deeper to highlight how the patriarchal system of marriage unleashes a reign of terror, misery and violence on an Indian woman for whom husband is Pati Parmeshwar, a socially given construct since ages. The play lays bare the victimization of a young educated girl who, brought up amidst the cultural setting of a principled Gandhian father, a Brahmin, gets married to a dalit poet with her father’s blessings. However, it is noticeable that her husband loses no time in making her the target of victimization and humiliation in his sadistic desire to punish her for the sufferings his ancestors have already gone through.

The present play, Kanyadaan centres around the travails of a girl in the marriage mart. Jyoti, a young and educated working girl from a politically and socially active Brahmin family, decides to marry a socially inferior but talented boy, Arun Athavale. She demolishes the societal divisions of caste, power and affluence to marry the dalit youth from a village. But what she gets in return is total negation of her identity and individuality through the revolting behaviour of her husband.
who wants to seek revenge on high society people whom he considers responsible for the age-long deprivation and marginalization of the dalits. The play deftly unveils intolerable tensions and frustrations, sufferings and sorrows the hypogamous marriage brings in its train in the life of a young woman of the so-called modern, cultured society. N.S. Dharan in this context rightly observes that it is an “unusual marriage” that “brings in its wake complex problems—problems at once self-created and unforeseen.” In Hindu religion one finds two types of inter-varna marriages. One type of inter-varna marriage is known as anuloma (hypergamous) marriage which is tolerated but not encouraged. But the other pratiloma (hypogamous) marriage i.e. the marriage of a lower varna man with a higher varna woman is considered to be “sacrilegious” according to Hindu religion and is unequivocally “Condemned.” However, in Kanyadaan, Jyoti’s father, Nath Devalikar, the social reformer and an MLA, strongly encourages his daughter when she decides on a hypogamous marriage, little realizing that his “wonderful experiment” will cause untold problems and complications in his daughter’s marital life. He feels rather very happy on being boy a dalit and says: “I know, it doesn’t make a difference. But if my daughter had decided to marry into high caste, it wouldn’t have pleased me as much ...well, I’m telling you the absolute truth”(p.504). Nath is quite enthused over his daughter’s courageous decision as it accords closely with his professed ideology.

The title of the play Kanyadaan refers to an ancient custom in which the father of the bride gives away his young marriageable daughter to an able young man of society. In India, marriage was and is considered a religious sacrament and it takes into consideration the equality of the partners in respect of Dharam (right conduct), Artha
(financial position), Kama (sex relation), and Moksha (final salvation). When the question of marriage is considered, various factors such as physical fitness, mental qualities, heredity, sexual compatibility and social and economic status are taken into consideration. Keeping in mind the climatic and ecological conditions of India, inter-racial, inter-communal, inter-religious and inter-caste marriages were condemned because cultural differences could result in maladjustment. The Hindus after centuries of experiences and experiments, keeping in view its civilization, cultural and social laws peculiar to India’s geographical and historical position, developed a sound and sensible institution of marriage. Kanyadaan is the play in which the father ignores traditional wisdom and readily agrees to his daughter’s choice and, in fact, encourages it:

Remember, it is we who are responsible for the age old sufferings of these people. We have betrayed them for generations. We should feel guilty about this. And now if Jyoti breaks her work, if she wriggles out of her responsibilities, it would be a kind of treachery. It would amount to running away from the challenge. As a father I would feel ashamed if my daughter were to run away ...[walks towards Jyoti and touches her gently.] I am with you, Jyoti....It upholds the norms of civilized humanity, and therefore, I stand by you. Go ahead my child, let us see what happens. (p.527)

All blame lies with the man, the father who, in fact, is making his daughter a sacrificial goat to be slaughtered at the altar of his improbable ideals. Wadikar’s observation is quite revealing of Nath’s attitude:

However, her idealist father, who dreams of a casteless society, appreciates her decision since he believes that society can not be transformed through words alone. Jyoti’s decision to marry Arun provides him an opportunity
to follow in the footsteps of the old social reformers who not only delivered speeches and wrote articles on the remarriages of widows but also married them.40

In comparison, Jyoti’s mother, Seva, a social activist, is stunned to hear her daughter. She intuitively apprehends the misery that may follow this inter-caste marriage and forewarns her daughter about it: “Jyoti, in my opinion you are acting in haste. Not even two whole months have passed since you two got acquainted. You don’t have a clear and complete understanding of the man”(pp 506-07). Being more practical than the father, Seva further cautions Jyoti of the incompatibility of their lifestyles: “But when a girl thinks of marriage, she has to look for some kind of stability. For some compatibility in lifestyles. After all, it is a matter of a lifelong relationship”(p.508). Nath does not get agree with Seva for her idea of lifestyles and stability and says: “If they decide to do so, lifestyles can certainly be changed. And the ideal of stability can be different for every man. After all, he is doing his B.A. why won’t he be able to stand on his own feet?”(p.508).The father is excited and dismisses mother’s questions concerning the boy’s background and occupation as irrelevant. Seva finds one excuse after another to stop this marriage although she is “self-righteous enough to say that she is not opposed to inter caste marriages per se.”41 When her intention is misunderstood, she clarifies herself to Jyoti:

My anxiety is not over his being a dalit. You know very well that Nath and I have been fighting untouchability tooth and nail, God knows since when. So that’s not the issue. But your life has been patterned in a certain manner. You have been brought up in a specific culture. To erase or to change all this overnight is just not possible. He is different in every way. You may not be able to handle it. (p.509)
The mother’s fear of her daughter’s adjustment in “such a different scenario and circumstances”\(^42\) is perfectly natural and genuine. Knowing her daughter’s capacity, the mother tries to convince the daughter in every possible way that her decision is not “very wise” and after marriage there is “no chance for a woman to hide or to run away”\((p.509)\). She finally advises Jyoti to reconsider and “think very carefully and decide”\((p.509)\). But Jyoti, who, with her idealist father’s support and encouragement “to adopt a revolutionary method,”\(^43\) has already made up her mind, tries to ease her mother’s mind by telling her that she will manage. However, Nath realizes that now his integrity as public advocate of inter-caste marriages and egalitarian society is on test. Naturally, in supporting Jyoti to the hilt he becomes blind to the fact that even Jyoti is not quite sure as to why she wants to marry Arun. He brushes aside Seva’s and Jyoti’s brother, Jaya Prakash’s objection to this marriage as nonsense:

Jaya Prakash: What is nonsensical about it, Bhai? Marriage, after all, is a knot tied for a lifetime.

Nath: Jayaprakash, do you know what it is to love at first sight? Tsk...studying is of no help here, this is a matter of plucking the heartstrings. If it rings here, it echoes there!

JayaPrakash: But Jyoti is not saying that her heartstrings have been playing music!

Nath: That’s exactly what must have happened, Eh, Jyoti? \([\text{Jyoti shakes her head to say no}]\)

JayaPrakash:[To Nath ] See!

Nath: (To Jyoti) You mean you didn’t fall in love?

Jyoti: I don’t know. Arun asked me, isn’t the very idea of marrying me dreadful to you? I said, what is dreadful about that? Arun said, you don’t think that I am an absolutely worthless fellow? I said, no! He said, this is incredible, and added, in that case let us get married. And I nodded.
Nath: [As if his hopes have been dashed] No surge of intense feelings in your heart? [Upon Jyoti’s shaking her head] No rainbow-hued notes played upon your nerves? [Upon her shaking her head again] No storm of hidden passions ...?

[She shakes her head again.] ...

Seva: Do you think you have done a wise thing?

Jyoti Sometimes I do. Sometimes I think I have acted like a fool. (pp. 507-08)

In spite of this straightforward statement about her state of mind which clearly needs parental guidance, Nath is in such a hurry to settle Jyoti’s marriage that he does not want to consider the pros and cons of this inter-caste marriage. He reassures her: “Doesn’t matter, Jyoti, don’t worry. We are all with you” (p. 509). In this context, the words of Nutan Gosavi are quite apt: “Nath, as is confirmed later, almost pushes her into the marriage, less out of parental affection than out of his perception that it is a great opportunity for an ideological experiment of his to work itself out”44

Nath’s attitude is typical male chauvinistic attitude which ignores his wife’s rational arguments and lacks concern for his daughter in the family. While the mother is quite hesitant about accepting Arun as Jyoti’s husband, father happily and readily consents. Seva is not ready to use her daughter’s life “for an experiment” (p. 524). The female remains the passive and subservient element in familial relationships and in decision taking too the rein remains in the hands of the male head of the family. In fact, it is deftly revealed by the playwright in Jyoti’s confused reply when Nath asks her to give her “objective assessment” and “impression” of the boy, (p. 524) whom she is going to marry:

He asked me, I said yes, quite spontaneously. To tell you the truth, I have been learning something of him only since then. Not only getting to know him, but also getting to know about him. And sometimes he shows
such a different side, that it strikes me, I don’t know him at all. At times I feel I can trust him, but the very next instant. I am left miles behind him. I ask myself-this thing that I want to do, is it the right thing ...? (pp.524-25)

In Kanyadaan it is a husband as well as a father who cares a fig for his wife’s and son’s warning and appreciates his daughter’s decision to marry a dalit boy. Tendulkar’s women like Jyoti in Kanyadaan figures as females being passive recipients of wrong notions and ideals from males in the family. Jyoti blindly “follows the dictates of her sentimental father and ignores the forewarnings of her cautious mother and invites serious threats to her married life.” However, Jyoti and Arun get married and “what follows is a sequence of violence, misery and disillusionment.” It is again a father, the successful progressive social reformer, who in his role as a catalyst puts the entire responsibility of bringing about the transformation in society on his daughter. He asserts that it is the duty of the girl like Jyoti to bring out the hidden goodness and talent in dalit men who have suffered humiliation for generations: “You can not imagine at what cost these people have made the little progress that they have. He is like unrefined gold, he needs to be melted and moulded. This is the need of the hour. Who can perform this task if not girls like Jyoti? Of course it is difficult, but it needs to be done”(p.527). Little worried about his daughter’s future, Nath only thinks that he can uproot casteism if his daughter, a Brahmin girl, marries to a dalit.

Tendulkar very skillfully reveals that it is a woman who is sacrificed in the play Kanyadaan which deals with human tendencies inherent in a man. Is it possible to change a male who is steeped in the age-old caste prejudices and tendencies? or Is it possible to make a man
more human if he has been born and brought up in a certain way? These are the questions which pose problems in the play. It is when Jyoti brings Arun to her house to introduce him to her family members that Arun’s sick psyche of his painful awareness of his low-class origin becomes clear: “Here, these damn houses of the city people, they’re like the bellies of sharks and crocodiles, each one alone in them!” (p.512). Arun feels uncomfortable in Jyoti’s big house which in comparison with his father’s hut seems like crocodiles and sharks which can gulp one down any time they want. By introducing a character like Arun, Tendulkar very dexterously introduces the idea that there can not be any give and take between the dalits and upper caste people. Arun says: “Our grandfathers and great grandfathers used to roam, barefoot, miles and miles, in the heat, in the rain, day and night ... till the rags on their butt fell apart...used to wander shouting ‘Johaar, Maayi-baap! Sir-Madam, sweeper!’ and their calls polluted the brahmins’ ears” (p.513).

As the conversation progresses further, Arun’s constant class consciousness makes him recall more painfully the sufferings they have undergone generation after generation like eating stale and stinking bread and the flesh of dead animals. He finally comes to the conclusion that the dalits can not fit into the Brahmin’s “unwrinkled Tinopal world” of “fragrant, ghee spread, wheat bread culture” (p.513). Again, it is Arun’s bitter and suppressed anger and hatred towards the upper caste which becomes noticeable when he asked Jyoti: “Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my father’s hut? Without vomiting? Tell me, Jyoti, can you shit everyday in our slum’s village toilet like my mother? Can you beg, quaking at every door, for a little grass for our buffaloes? Come on, tell me!” (p.513). Arun’s culture, mannerism, uncouth language and plans for the future are not liked by
Seva, the mother, at all. She is shocked and silenced to hear Arun say that he and his wife shall be brewing illicit liquor as "this business is highly profitable...If there are children, there is work for them also, to wash glasses and plates, to fetch paan and cigarettes. And very good income in the tips. Many hands to work, and so many chances to rake in money" (p.513). In spite of this it is Nath Devalikar, the father, who says that Arun’s mentality should be understood as he is not a middle-class man like us to be understood: “He has been brought up in the midst of poverty and hatred. These people’s psychological make-up is altogether different...we must try to understand him and that is extremely difficult" (p.524). Nath in order to practise democracy in the real sense in his home asks the family: "Hereafter all of us must forget our differences of opinion and go along with Jyoti. Whatever support she may need, we must give whole-heartedly" (p.526).

The play reveals that Arun’s acute consciousness of his low-class origin induces in him a fiercely convulsive attitude towards the “white collar culture” (p.540) of his wife which later on had a devastating impact upon their marital life. Jyoti has to learn to live not only in a house which is bereft of the simple necessities of life but also to adjust to a lower-caste man who might have seemed to be attractive as a young, brash intellectual with revolutionary ideas but in reality seems to be taking revenge against centuries of exploitation by the higher castes of the society. In Jyoti’s case it is not just the wide chasm between romance and reality but the fact that she becomes an ablation in the fire sacrifice of social change because of her father’s aggressive backing which stands out. All the efforts of her mother and brother to rescue Jyoti from “the horrible suffering” come to nothing.
The play centers round the upheaval in a Brahmin family when the daughter marries a dalit man. The dalit male, “a complete boor” (p.536) persecutes his upper-class wife; speaks rubbish, comes home drunk, mercilessly beats her and kicks her even in her pregnancy. Unfortunately, mother’s fears and anxieties come true and “the marriage turns into a nightmare” (p.537). It is only after a few months of married life with Arun that Jyoti returns home absolutely shattered and utterly exhausted. On her father’s proposal that they can accommodate Arun also in their house, she replies in utter distress and helplessness but with strong determination never to return to him: “He ... will not enter this house... I have left him ... I am not going back to him again ... never... I am fed up with him. Fed up! Fed up!” (p.535). It is strange that when Jyoti decides to separate from Arun, tired of his behaviour and constant battering by him, Nath gets worried not for his daughter but for failure of his experiment. This is how he passionately exhorts his wife to save this inter-caste marriage:

Seva, let not this wonderful experiment fail! This dream which is struggling to turn real, let it not crumble into dust before our eyes! We will have to do something. We must save this marriage. Not necessarily for our Jyoti’s sake... This is not just a question of our daughter’s life, Seva, this has... a far wider significance ... this experiment is a very precious experiment. (p.537)

Maya Pandit aptly observes: “In Kanyadaan Jyoti becomes a site, a battleground on which the clash between the upper caste and the dalit castes take shape. She becomes the vessel in which the conflicting caste ideologies pour their aspirations for power.” (p.537) Through Jyoti’s “ uncontrollable sobs,” and “quivering voice,” (p.535) the playwright ironically exposes the “unbounded hatred” (p.536) she feels for her husband who “always remains conscious of his lower class origin and
inflicts on Jyoti inhumane cruelties.” Arun’s venomous contempt for Jyoti and her class is clearly revealed when he himself tells Seva: “What am I but the son of scavengers. We don’t know the non-violent ways of Brahmins like you. We drink and beat our wives...we make love to them...but the beating is what gets publicized....I am a barbarian, a barbarian by birth. When have I claimed any white collar culture?” (p.540). The play suggests that it is Arun’s acute consciousness of his low-caste origin which sharpens his attacks on his wife and her ‘white collar culture.’ Wadikar very appropriately describes that he is so “because of his dalit background and environment.” Arun himself tells Jayaparkash and Seva: “From childhood I have seen my father come home drunk everyday, and beat my mother half dead, seen her cry her heart out. Even now I hear the echoes of her broken sobs. No one was there to wipe her tears. My poor mother! She didn’t have a father like Bhai, nor a mother like you...”(pp 529-30). The play highlights how such psychological impressions of early childhood become the cause of Arun’s violent behaviour later at home. According to Jyoti, Arun Athavale, the lover at the beginning and later the husband, is a bundle of contradictions: “Arun is both the beast, and the lover. Arun is the demon, and also the poet. Both are bound together....Tell me, where is that beast I should drag out and destroy, where is that God I should rouse from his sleep?”(p.564). In the course of time, Jyoti comes to the conclusion that “filthy cursing” and physical torture are a part of his “frenzied love” (p.564). Arun is made up of all this horrible stuff bound together and she has to accept him as he is, because she cannot reject him. It is his “inferiority complex that makes him restless and gets him sadistic pleasure in inflicting pains and miseries on his wife.”
Arun in *Kanyadaan* shows in his cruel and violent behaviour towards Jyoti, a girl of upper caste, how social oppression can turn the victim into a victimizer. Arun Athavale tries to hurt his upper-caste wife and abuses her parents calling Seva, “a procuress” (p.545) who supplies girls from the Seva dal to the Socialist leaders and the father “an eunuch” (p.546) and not Jyoti’s real father. Arun considers the high caste people beasts for treating the dalits inhumanly. He also abuses them for being highborn. On the other hand, Jaiprakash by drawing a parallel between Israel army persecuting Palestine Arabs and enjoying it, strikes the problem at its root. His conclusion is: “Perhaps those who are hunted derive great pleasure in hunting others when they get an opportunity to do so. The oppressed are overjoyed when they get a chance to oppress others....In other words, Yesterday’s victim is today’s victimizer” (p.547).

What Jaiprakash wants to do is to convince his father that Arun’s community has been the victim of exploitation and humiliation for generations. And perhaps, Arun now derives a peculiar enjoyment in perpetrating violence against his wife. But Nath, who trusts Arun Athavale blindly, rejects his son’s rational thinking immediately saying: “It’s all wrong, Prakash! Absolutely wrong” (p.547). In addition, there is Seva, who has a woman-like sensitivity to gauze a situation realistically. When she feels furious, she uncovers the brutal reality of her daughter's marital life to a contented father:

The truth is that your dalit son-in-law who can write such a wonderful autobiography, and many lovely poems, wants to remain an idler. He wants his wife to work. And with her money he wants to drown himself in drink, and have a hell of a time with his friends. On top of that, for entertainment, he wants to kick his wife in the belly. Why not? Doesn’t his wife belong to the high caste? In this way he is returning all the
kicks aimed at generations of his ancestors by men of high caste. It appears that this is the monumental mission he has set out to fulfill. (pp. 543-44)

Through inter-caste marriage between a dalit and a Brahmin, Tendulkar has drawn attention to the fact that the hellish sufferings that Jyoti receives in her matrimonial life with Arun is a kind of revenge that he seeks on the Brahmins for having humiliated and exported his ancestors for centuries. Nath is surprised and tormented to discover that his son-in-law, who has written such a ‘wonderful autobiography’ is “a hypocrite and an avenger.” He feels enraged and nauseated by “overweening arrogance” (p. 553) and cunning manipulative tactics of Arun Athawale, who wants to blackmail his father-in-law in his professional life. Arun wishes Nath to preside over the discussion of his autobiographical novel.

But Seva tells him that his refusal “will give one more stick to Arun to beat Jyoti with.” This time Nath feels helpless but does decide to go by Seva’s pragmatic advice for the sake of his daughter. But Jyoti does not like her father’s appeasing policy in delivering an insincere and dishonest speech. However, in the final scene, Nath in a critical self-analysis blames himself for the situation Jyoti is in: “What I spoke today was rubbish, all of it, hollow, hypocritical, flat and meaningless drivel! (p. 556). He further adds: “I did it for the sake of my brave and innocent daughter. What is this compared to her having ruined her whole life for my sake?” (pp. 557).

Nath admits that he has pushed his daughter into a valley of miseries as she has sacrificed her life for his sake. Nath was determined to uproot the ghost of caste-System and Verna-differences, but his plans misfired. It is here that Tendulkar portrays the transformation in Nath
from a stubborn idealist into a disillusioned realist. When he admits his defeat:

Why? Why did I commit such sins? For the sake of my precious daughter, my innocent child. If she has committed any crime it is this: she took her father’s words for gospel! Truth. She adopted her father’s values. She was guided by her father’s humanism and liberalism. Jayaprakash, do me a favour. Reject your father. Learn to see through his naïveté and idiocy. (p.558)

At this crucial juncture, Jyoti discovers that she has been “a mere pawn” on her father’s “ideological chess board.” She accusing her father of making her an experimental “guinea-pigs” (p.565) to test his socialist ideas says that a man and his tendencies would remain the same. She says that she has learnt this bitter truth from her own bitter experiences rejecting the idealistic notions taught by her father: “You made me waste twenty years of my life before I could discover this. I had to learn it on the strength of my own experience....Arun gave me what you had withheld from me, I must acknowledge my debt to him”(p.563).

Jyoti says that hence forward nobody should come to her house and touch her because she is an untouchable, “a scavenger”(p.566) now. She refuses to be labelled a “harijan” (p.566) because that is a term she despises, she is not Jyoti Yadinath Devalikar but Jyoti Arun Athavale. It is obvious that the father in patriarchal set up has all powers over his daughter. He can even instill certain half-baked idealistic notions in her mind making her mentally disabled but as a married daughter she reminds her father: “I have my husband. I am not a widow. Even if I become one I shan’t knock at your door (p.566). Jyoti’s remarks throw light on the fact that she becomes for her father a tool “to seek atonement of the sins” the upper caste people have inflicted on the dalits for centuries. “Marriage is the solution for this and one it has
taken place, girls like Jyoti will have to keep it intact no matter at what cost. This is a path of no return.\textsuperscript{57}

Moreover, in Jyoti’s rejection of Nath as her guide and more painfully as her father, Tendulkar highlights “the development of Jyoti’s character from a soft-spoken and highly cultured Brahmin girl into a hardened spouse of her dalit husband.”\textsuperscript{58} Through Father-daughter and husband-wife relationship, \textit{Kanyadaan} speaks volumes of physical, psychological and verbal violence against woman in the male-dominated Indian society.

Through husband-wife relationship between Jyoti and Arun, Tendulkar draws attention to the fact that discriminating and repressive social stratification in India is also one of the major causes of rebellion and violence in the section of the society Arun belongs to. It is through father-daughter relationship of Nath and Jyoti that Tendulkar attacks the hypocrisy of the patriarchal society where a father’s socio-political ideology too becomes a tool of oppression for the weaker-gender the daughter in the family. India has traditionally been a patriarchal society. Even today there have been efforts to make women educated and empowered, but still they are dominated and influenced by their men in social as well as personal life. Woman has no choice of her own in a male-dominated society and the situation is the same whether she is unmarried Benare or married Jyoti.

The preceding discussion of the plays---\textit{Silence! The Court is in Session} and \textit{Kanyadaan}---reveals the fact that even educated and self-reliant women---both married and unmarried--- are not only marginalized and objectified, but also subjected to multifaceted forms of violence within or without family. It establishes the fact that the so-called modernized education has failed to remove the deep rooted evils from the social
system. Through the exploitation and marginalization of women, the playwright not only highlights the inadequacies of our education system, but also makes a dig at the conventional, social and familial system where women—both educated and uneducated—are still subjugated.
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2. Ibid.


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11. Vijay Tendulkar, Silence! The Court is in Session in Collected Plays in Translation (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 55. Subsequent citations to the text of the play are also from the same
edition, and the page numbers in all such cases have been given in parentheses immediately following the quotation.


13 Ibid., p. 36.


16 Ibid., p. 36.


18 Ibid., p. 174.

19 Banerjee, p. ix.

20 Dass, pp. 99-100.

21 “Feminist Concerns in Vijay Tendulkar’s Plays”, p. 175.

22 Banerjee, p. ix.

23 Wadikar, p. 61.


25 Dass, p. 102.

26 “Feminist Concerns in Vijay Tendulkar’s Plays”, p. 100.
27 Wadikar, p. 61.


29 “Silence! The Court is in Session: A Strong Social Commentary,” p. 37.


32 Wadikar, p.110.

33 Ibid., p.113.

34 Madge, p.27.

35 Dharan, p.87.

36 Madge, p.70.

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41 Madge, p.155.


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48 Wadikar, p.110.

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53 Dharan, p.92.

54 Madge, p. 164.

55 Ibid., p. 165

55 Ibid., p.71.

56 Ibid., p.71.

57 Prasad p.98.

58 Ibid., p.99.