POLITICS OF SILENCE

No, no, don’t run.

Don’t take long strides,

Don’t raise your voice,

Be a woman, be moderate in everything

Be a model of mediocrity...

Lakshmi Kannan in Iyengar

For as soon as we exist, we are born into language and language speaks (to) us, dictates its law, law of death...we are already seized by a certain kind of masculine desire…

Helene Cixous

It is discernible how in the Indian society, the language of patriarchy forbids all transgressions for women. They are constantly reminded of their feminine qualities, including a low-pitch of tone, moving and running at a moderate pace. They are asked to be sacrificing, devotional and dedicated throughout their life. In any case, if they somehow manage to break the glass-ceiling, they invite censure, if not downright rejection and are forced to perform each and every duty unequivocally. The representation of mythical heroines is deliberately glorified by their masculine counterparts. This is done to keep women confined within ‘her’ space. While considering this space to be inadequate for a woman, Virginia Woolf demands room for her in her essay, “A Room of One’s Own” (1929) because a woman is often deprived of her speech and thus condemned to silence. The silent/silenced centre is the predicament of women, caught in the oppressive structures.

Various traditions identify and confirm “silence” to be an appropriate condition for the female segment of humanity. It is maintained that this silence is an adage of a woman’s natural state. Before investigating the historical and theoretical background of the relations between woman and silence, especially in Indian context, it is imperative to get acquainted with the literal and etymological significance of the word ‘silence’. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary states that it is complete absence of sound; the fact or state of abstaining from speech; the avoidance of mentioning or discussing something; cause to become silent; and prohibition or
prevention from speaking. Concomitantly, *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines it as forbearance from speech or noise; muteness—often used interjectionally; absence of sound or noise; stillness; absence of mention: Oblivion, Obscurity, and Secrecy.

Silencing similarly means: to compel or reduce to silence; suppress, to cause or cease hostile firing or criticism. Silence often indicates cramped feeling of not writing or talking but not being heard or ridiculed or being ignored or talking only ephemerally. It is also a representation of various aspects of mind, life and nature, the ineffable. It is a signifier of what happens in the personal and historical spaces between the acts. Carmen Luke refers to ‘silence’ as an indication of dissent and a tool of survival and calls it a refusal to participate in the research and technique of resisting the historical legacies of colonialism (qtd. in Kramarae 235). Silence is a diverse concept—an auditory signal in a linguistic theory, a pragmatic and discursive strategy, and a realization of a taboo and a tool of manipulation (Jaworski 3). While recognizing ‘silence’ as a possible means of communication, Jaworski in *The Power of Silence: Social and Pragmatic Perspectives* (1993) observes it to perform a range of functions viz. linkage function for uniting and separating two persons; affective function to heal or wound over time; function of disclosure making something known or hiding; judgmental function indicating assent or dissent and function of activity signaling thoughtfulness or mental inactivity (66-67).

Van Manen understands ‘silence’ in literal terms as the space between the words that can be awkward, poetic, chilling or rebellious. It is more prevalent in communication, scholarship and work in a variety of ways as silent treatment, tender concern, forceful condemnation, comfortable intimacy or a shared understanding. The epistemological meaning is grounded in philosophy of tacit knowledge which in turn is the phenomenon of knowing without being able to articulate what we know whereas the ontological category takes up the silence of being or life itself (qtd. in Clair 6).

The silence of women has been considerably dealt with by French feminist Helene Cixous, in an essay titled “Sorties: out and out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays” (1975). Commenting on the relationship between men and women, Cixous believes that silent submissiveness conventionally places women on the side of negativity, passivity, and subjection. For her, the conditioning of women to bind their speech may not only be explicit but also indirect. This conditioning denies them the means of
expressing themselves strongly thereby encouraging linguistic expressions that suggest triviality and uncertainty about their subject.

Silence has been “scriptured” in women within dominating social structures, as the modes of speaking and behaving which deny women free investiture to language get reinforced. Nancy Henley while examining the forms of sexist language classifies it in three categories: language that ignores women, language that defines women narrowly; and language that depreciates women (qtd. in Weatherall 13).

A silent woman, as is revealed through historiography, is deliberately more admired than the one who questions the hidden politics behind such an expression. Firminger and Dyer in Folklore of Women accrue maxims and proverbs reckoning women’s objectification and sophistication: “Maidens should be mild and meek; Swift to hear and slow to speak”, “maids should be seen and not heard” and “silence is a fine jewel for women but little worn” (46). This silence is virtually regarded as the best ornament of women by the gentlemen constructing the culture through literature. Any camaraderie of such a trait within men is never mentioned.

While commenting upon the eloquence of women, Joseph Addison also demeans women for their garrulousness in his essay “Lady Orators”, though he justifies his assault by suggesting that his purpose is largely satirical.

Silence, in both the literal meaning of the word, and in its extended significance of not being heard, or not being free to speak authentically has also been the mark of woman as victim, especially in a culture which does not accept her as the equal. Such a culture insists upon recognizing her inherent differences, and treats her as an object, as other, as absence and emptiness. A woman, therefore, is absent while being present and her existence speaks of her ‘ontological silence’. Mary Daly conceptualizes “Great Silence” that makes women invisible. In her treatise Beyond God the Father, she argues that religious institutions are grounded in the principle of silencing women to promote patriarchy (qtd. in Clair 30). Adrienne Rich who had the dream of a common language, remarks: “Where language and naming are power, silence is oppression, is violence” (qtd. in Spender 59). This silence is their invisibility, their powerlessness which is very much visible and inherent in Vijay Tendulkar’s plays.

In social practices, the dominant social groups exercise power when communicating in a manner often taken to be natural as well as legitimate, whereas
the subordinate groups exercise their powerlessness: men dominate while women submit. Power is routinely exercised through speech and this speech and language is man-made, as Dale Spender emphatically states in her Man Made Language (1980). Demonstrating the strategies of exclusion, repression, and denial Michelle B. Walker remarks that women are ‘socially’ positioned as outsiders within a discursive system that constructs its own politically motivated spatial and logical arrangements between in and out (179). Tillie Olsen in Silences (1965) argues that women are afraid of speaking because of oppression or other restraints on their speech. She reveals that the working class people, people of colour and women have, in fact, written but have been officially ignored, ultimately leading them to premature silence.

It is obvious that men and women are often not given equal opportunities of self-growth and self-development. In view of the significance attributed to speech and silence in the context of gender and power relations, it should be understood how and in what different ways men force women into silence. Spender mentions:

Historically women have been excluded from production of cultural forms, and language is, after all, a cultural form—a most important one… Women have not been the influential philosophers, orators or poets or politicians, rhetoricians, the grammarians, the linguists or the educators and they have not had the same opportunity to influence the language, to introduce new meanings…. (52)

The representations that deny women any language are controlled by men and often delimit their status. In his Nineteen Eighty Four, George Orwell brings forward the significance of this control, saying, “who controls the past controls the future: Who controls the present controls the past” (309). Men control the present as well as the future, in a patriarchal society, by making women speechless—excluding them from history, literature and other important works—thereby writing and rewriting past according to their own dogmas.

The most famous illustration of silencing of a woman is available in Ovidian myth where Echo is punished by Juno by depriving her of independent speech. She can only repeat what is said by others around her (qtd. in Fantham 44).

Ovid in Metamorphoses retells the myth of Philomela where Tereus cuts her tongue to force her into silence. As a result, she is unable to bear witness to the rape by Tereus. The text basically shows two rapes; one literal and the other symbolic. One
might assume that the literal rape is committed on the body, while the figurative one is on the spirit, as it is the rape of speech or cutting off of the tongue (Hendricks and Oliver 149). The paradigmatic myth of Philomela talks of forced silence. All such myths are essentially illusory representations, thereby tending to be marked by reality. Still reality is embedded in every myth in some form or the other. According to Warner, myths offer a lens which can be used to see human identity in its social and cultural context...myths convey values and expectations which are always evolving, in the process of being formed, but and this is fortunate—never set so hard they cannot be changed again (qtd. in Coupe 189).

Although myths are not verifiable like historical facts, they represent the reality symbolically and metaphorically. These symbols and metaphors pass from one generation to another, and thus become an integral part of the collective memory of a particular society and culture. Metaphorically, the cutting of tongue in the myth of Philomela talks of forced silencing where a woman is not allowed to speak against the injustice done to her.

Since the chapter proposes to analyze Tendulkar’s Marathi plays, an understanding of the question of silence of women in terms of literary and cultural practices prevalent in India becomes apparent. In Indian tradition and history, women have been idolized and idealized or demeaned, suppressed and forced into silence. Indian myths, scriptures and epics are full of images of women that make them silent and assign them set, defined roles. Since these are considered to be sacred, they automatically penetrate into our social structures and thereafter into our unconscious minds making us a part of this process. To a significant extent, The Ramayana and The Mahabharata are integral to the lives of the Indian people. The images of women present in these myths become the modus operandi of how contemporary Indian women should lead their lives.

The position of women in contemporary Indian society is largely the result of their status inscribed in these myths. During the times of The Mahabharata, the ideal of a woman’s loyalty to her husband was markedly different from the one that was sanctified by the successive generations and a woman was considered a “silent field”, all that she had to do was to produce children on demand, thus becoming a ‘clockwork’. The misogynist says that it is a woman who starts a quarrel and the men fight it out; and that all the wars where much blood has been shed were triggered by women.
Iravati Karve in *Yuganta* observes: “In the *Satyayuga* Sita was *Kritya*, in the *Dvaparayuga* Draupadi was *Kritya*, and in the *Kaliyuga* there are *Krityas* in every house” (92). A *Kritya* is understood to be a ferocious, demonic woman. It is told that Sita was the contention in Rama’s war against Ravana. The mythical representation of Sita has generally been an endeavour loaded with cultural freight since she is often identified as the prototypical standard of self-sacrificing wife. In *The Ramayana*, Rama raises doubts about Sita’s conduct—‘How could I representing a great family, take you back after you have fallen into Ravana’s lap and been beheld by his filthy vision’ (qtd. in Scharf 12). In the classical version of *Ramayana*, Rama’s rejection of Sita is linked to ideal king’s duty and Rama’s attitude to her abduction by Ravana is questioned. Sita propagates this silence as an image of ideal womanhood, something that is revered by Indian women:

> If some are faithless, wilt thou find
> No love and truth in woman kind?
> Doubt others if thou wilt, but own
> The truth which all my life has shown. (qtd. in Holm and Bowker 64)

Sita is thus not allowed to articulate her feelings about proving her chastity, a tradition that has been followed by every Indian woman. Her questions are not responded to. Her voice is not confirmed. She speaks, but is not heard. The only thing it confirms is that she is a product of an androcentric society. She is, therefore, not looked upon as an individual, but as her husband’s consort and appendage. Tendulkar’s Sarita in *Kamala*, a play under analysis in this study, like mythological Sita, is an obedient wife who does each and every work assigned to her by her husband. She is supposed to perform the wifely duties even when not asked for by the husband. Saritas and Sitas are the products of Indian society—helpless and voiceless. In Sarita’s character in the play *Kamala*, Tendulkar offers a revaluation of the role of Indian woman. Tendulkar reveals a post-colonial bias in exhibiting the fact that women are still mere slaves to their male masters, just the way they had been in the myths, Dharamshastras or other scriptures.

There is an unsubstantiated opinion, particularly popular after the Jain Puranas, that Draupadi is the cause of the war in *The Mahabharata*. When Yuddhishtra loses the game of dice, in which Draupadi is pawned off, Duhshasana drags her into
the hall. At that point, she poses a question that is loaded with legal and moral implications. In Sabha Parva, Draupadi says: “Why O Pratikamin, Dost thou say so? What prince is there who playeth staking his wife? The king was certainly intoxicated with dice. Else could he not find any other object to stake?” (Vyasa 140) She again questions angrily: “Hear me, please. I have been forcibly brought in here and none among the heroic and law-abiding friends of Kuru clan is condemning this vile act. What has happened to king Dhritrashtra, Drona, Bhisma, and Vidura?” (Sarma 172) ‘Hear me please’, the very phrase makes it clear how well Draupadi was being heard. Howsoever, her protest goes unheeded by the dignitaries in that gathering; an ironical situation where a woman seems to be speaking but is not heard.

It is pertinent to mention that the position of women, as reflected in the Indian scriptures, Hindu folklore and tradition, is a realistic representation of women of those times. In Manusmriti, Manu mentions the laws prescribed for women in society:

Pita rakshati kaumarai, bharta rakshati yauwanai,
Rakshanti sthaviray putra, karyakshetre cha swaminah.
(qtd. in Jois 33)

The couplet depicts the traditional status of a typical Indian woman who is protected by her father until her marriage; husband does so after marriage, a son in her old age, thus, different men dominate her work-field at different times. In fact, she does not have an independent status or position, as she is always dependent upon men for her identity, status or value. It is the man who gives her the voice or the right to speak. Tulsidas in Sri Ramacharitmanas presents contempt for the whole lot of womankind as they are compared to a drum that produces sound, only if it is beaten. She is also equated to an illiterate, obstinate and a mean person: dhola, gavara, sudra, pasu, nari, sakala tarana ke adhikari (576). Similarly, Satapatha Brahmaana compares women with shudras, dogs and crows and declares them as personifications of untruth and impurity. This silenced representation of a woman confirms the concealed politics. The Aitareya Brahmaana gives the story of Harishchandra’s desire for a son instead of daughter and justifies it by saying: “The father who looks upon the face of his son, born living to him, discharges his debt in him…the son is to him a rescuing boat…in him you have the blameless world of heaven. The daughter is a sorrow, while the son is light in the highest regions of heaven to his father” (qtd. in Jhingran 91, 92). A son here is again a voice, power and subject while daughter is the silence, the other and the object.
In *Manusmriti*, there is a prescription of a general code of conduct for the society. According to Manu, women are naturally lustful and ever ready to seduce men. They are frivolous, heartless and full of untruth (qtd. in Jhingran 94). Manu further relates women with bed, seat, ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice and bad conduct (Buhler 330). Women did not participate in various rituals and were devoid of rights in property as conveyed by Manu’s shloka: *Bharya putrascha dasascha tra evadnaa Smrataa, Yatte samadhigachhanti yasaya teh tasya tudhdhanam* (Shastri 551). For him, a wife, a son and a slave these three are declared to have no property; the wealth which they earn is (acquired) for him to whom they belong (Buhler 228).

When a woman is considered as someone’s property, she is immediately reduced to a ‘thing’. The representation of a woman in literature leads to image formation, making her docile, unwanted and unable to express her views. Hindu women come from diverse cultural, linguistic, geographical and social backgrounds and their roles have been varied in history, literary tradition and society. The mythological, sociological, and philosophical perspectives on women are responsible for their cultural construction, and its perpetuation.

Kim Knott in *Hinduism*, states: “The focus on the upliftment of women was one aspect of the trend by Orientalists and Hindu reformers to reclaim the Aryan past. The argument related to position and upgradation of women progressively became associated with Hindu nationalist cause and repeated by the Arya Samaj and later campaigners” (74). The Vedic pantheon was dominated by the male deities, whereas Pre-Aryan and post-Vedic was dominated by feminine images of divine. But there came a change in the roles and images of women with a passage of time, a ‘masculine politics’ for silencing women.

The otherness/silencing of women can be seen in various genres of literature, whether it is fiction, poetry or drama. Modern theatre, is taken as a subtext, inflexions constitute its lexicon, ‘silence’ its grammar, gestures its punctuations whereas actors and auditors its co-authors. In the modern plays, right from Ibsen to Beckett or Pinter, without the exception of Tendulkar, of course, words are often pierced by silence. This space separates modern dramatists from the ancient ones. Harold Pinter puts this concept of modern stage in perspective: “We communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and…what takes place is continual evasion… There are two
silences. One is when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is employed. This speech is speaking of language locked beneath it. That is its continual reference. The speech that we hear is an indication of that we don’t hear” (qtd. in Kane 132).

The contemporary practices in theatre involve non-verbal and non-linguistic modes of communication, whereby the conception of language is stretched beyond the canonical limits to include cultural and behavioral patterns, silences, pauses and gaps. These facilitate articulation more powerfully than the linguistic voice itself. Tendulkar has used this medium to bring to surface the silencing of women.

In view of this ambiguity in the gendering of silence, the study examines binaries such as eloquence/muteness or colonizer/colonized or male/other in the two texts by Tendulkar namely Kamala and Silence! The Court is in Session. These plays of Tendulkar project representation of women as speechless objects, though he categorically emphasizes that he has only come through the reality and wants his readers and audience to experience that reality. Both these plays portray certain female protagonists, who are either silent by themselves or are made so by dominant patriarchal forces. Tendulkar admits: “As a writer, I find myself persistently inquisitive, non conformist, ruthless, cold and brutal as compared to the other committed and human ....As a social being, I am against all exploitation and I passionately feel that all exploitation must end…” (CPT xliii).

The first play under study, named Silence! The Court is in Session (1967) (Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe) explores a real life incident of a group of amateur players going to stage a mock-trial, something Tendulkar had overheard himself. This play was staged for the first time at Rangayan on 28th December 1967 under the direction of Arvind Deshpande and thereafter it came into existence in translation by Priya Adarkar (Madge 182).

With the production of this play, Vijay Tendulkar emerges as a rebel against the established order of a fundamentally orthodox society. This is why the play became a subject of massive controversy. The heroine, Leela Benare in this play, is not at an acquiescent woman who is at the receiving end of scathing male gaze or assault, but an aggressive transgressor of the sexual mores of her community. As a rebel, she challenges the executors and the levers of patriarchy operating in the play largely in absentia (Bandopadhaya in CPT xliv). The analysis will explore whether
this protagonist is really a dissenter or she is controlled by the dominant forces. Leela Benare is cross examined in the court with full mockery. Sukhatme, one of the characters suggests to the theatre artists to treat Ms. Benare as the accused in the mock trial, wherein she has to perform the role of woman indicted of infanticide. As the trial gets underway, all the witnesses and authorities become inimical towards her for being “an unmarried single mother” and her audacity in entering into illicit relations with several men. The charges against Leela Benare are levelled by the men who represent the ‘collective mindscape’ of the society. Leela struggles very hard to break free of this enslavement to ‘collective prejudice’, as she firmly believes that the truth and reality are experienced only when the difference between the mask and the face is exposed. All the men stick together to pin her down. The foremost concern of Tendulkar is to expose their façade, hypocrisy and duplicity.

While positioning a woman in silence, the play explores the normal event of theatre artists both men and women who meet for a rehearsal of their play, but end up initiating a mock-trial, deftly handled and steered by Tendulkar. It focuses on the human mind and detects the ugliness latent in it. As David Mamet, uses education system to expose the ironic desire for power in Oleanna (1991), similarly, Tendulkar attacks the institution of law and education to expose deceitful and crooked ways of society. Law and education are meant to protect the rights of human beings, and also to consolidate ethics if either fails.

The play is divided into three acts. The title signifies the power of coercive, imposed silence of Leela Benare, the protagonist, which descends on her during her mock-trial, in which she is charged with infanticide. She is a young middle-class woman of thirty-four years of age, who works as a school teacher to earn her livelihood. She is punctual, loved and appreciated by her students in school. One of her declarations to a co-actor draws the applause from the feminists: “I never had been behind with my lesson! Exercises corrected on time too, not a bit of room for disapproval, I don’t give an inch of it to anyone!” (CPT 57) Supporting Leela Benare, Shanta Gokhale in her essay Tendulkar on his Own Terms, remarks: “Leela Benare is young, single, unconventional, full of laughter, full of pride in her dedication to and skill in teaching, and always happy to attack hypocritical facades and watch them crumble. In her view, men aren’t superior beings by definition. They must prove
themselves before they command her respect” (qtd. in Choudhury and Rajan 81). However this ‘bold’ woman is not allowed to remain so.

The play involves the cultural and traditional settings of Indian subcontinent in general and Maharashtra in particular, as Tendulkar picks the protagonist from Maharashtra society. The traditional role and images of women as ideals have been projected by males, making women’s state all the more pathetic. Tarabai Shinde in her full-fledged feminist argument, Stri Purusha Tulna, ridicules all the men who used the shastras, Puranas and pothis to justify the superiority of women represented in mythologies (qtd. in Feldhaus 205). Tendulkar also challenges such notions by adding a touch of irony and sarcasm, especially when he makes Leela Benare remark: “Order, order! This is all straight out of a school composition book” (CPT 80). In the face of every binary opposition, which relegates women to the position of the ‘other’, Tarabai retains the division but treats men as the embodiment and the root cause of the ‘other’ (qtd. in Feldhaus 206). This strong protest from Shinde against men came after the incident of Vijayalaxmi in Maharashtra, who had an abortion or had committed infanticide, but the court sentenced her to death. The Pune Vaibhav came out with virulent article attacking Vijayalaxmi, and women in general, for their ‘new’ loose morals. Tarabai universalizes the condition of women and opines: “Even in ancient civilizations like Rome and Greece such crimes [adultery and infanticide] used to be punished most severely (qtd. in Tharu and Lalita Women Vol I 221, 234). Her response shows how men are invariably guilty of the very vices they accuse women of. Men, for Shinde, are often responsible even for the few vices women have, establishing that women are braver than men:

Though every day we see new and more terrible examples of men’s violence, audacity, and cunning, yet no one pays any attention to these; instead people continue to heap the burden of all wrongs onto the women themselves. (qtd. in Tharu and Lalita Women Vol I 222)

The virtually inarticulate Leela Benare in the play carries a child and is contemptuously reminded of this fact by her co-actors. It is appropriate to say here that Leela is again and again charged for the crime she has not committed or is not to be punished alone, as Prof. Damle is equally responsible for it. The other males grasp this opportunity to ridicule and belittle her, thus, exposing their inhuman and heinous acts. The mock court penalizes Leela for adultery, laying the whole blame on her and
punishing her: “Therefore this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed” (CPT 119). Such language of the dominating men snuffs out whatever little voice of protest an otherwise outspoken woman like Leela might have.

Dealing with this politics of language, Gloria Anzaldua in her essay “How to tame a Wild Tongue” poses certain questions: “And I think, how do you tame a wild tongue, train it to be quiet, how do you bridle and saddle it? How do you make it lie down?” (qtd. in R Ferguson 203) In his effort to support Leela Benare’s stance, Tendulkar minutely observes wickedness inherent in human heart and questions why man symbolically becomes Lord (man) of the Flies (woman), to play a variation with the title of William Golding’s novel.

Benare admits to Samant, a local villager, who escorts the amateur dramatic troupe members to the village hall, that little children are much better than the adults. She says: “They don’t have the blind pride of thinking they know everything. There is no nonsense stuffed in their heads. They don’t scratch you till you bleed, then run away like cowards” (CPT 57). Grown-ups in her scheme of things lack the spirit of living with utmost dedication to life itself. Later, she condemns Damle, the man who is responsible for her pregnancy and swindles her:

I offered up my body on the altar of my worship. And my intellectual god took the offering and went his way He didn’t want my mind, or my devotion—he didn’t care about them! He was not a god. He was a man, for him everything was the body, for the body? That is all. (CPT 118)

Benare enjoys the company of Samant as Tendulkar has created an outspoken woman in her persona. She admits to him: “I felt even more wonderful coming here with you. I am so glad the others fell behind” (CPT 55). She has her own philosophy of life and loves her independent ways. Tendulkar has made her enjoy life to the fullest. She is critical of hypocrisy in everyone’s attitude. Benare is a very serious and confident woman who hates hypocrisy and falsehood. She relishes life to the hilt and is passionate about living each moment intensely. In one of her conversations with Samant, her personality can be assessed:

BENARE: I am the soul of seriousness! But I don’t see why one should go around all the time with the long face...we should laugh, we
should play, we should sing! If we can and if they will let us, we should dance too. Shouldn’t have any false modesty or dignity. Or care for anyone! I mean it. When your life is over, do you think anyone will give you a bit of theirs? What do you say, Samant? Do you think they will?

SAMANT: You are quite right. The great sage Tukaram said…at least I think it was him…

BENARE: Forget about the sage Tukaram. I say it—I, Leela Benare, a living woman, I say it from my own experience. Life is not meant for anyone else. It’s your own life. It must be. It is a very, very important thing. Every moment, every bit of it is precious…. (CPT 61)

A total foil to Leela Benare is Mrs. Kashikar, another female character, who becomes a participant in the patriarchal system, supposedly due to the lack of economic power. However, she too experiences masculine ruthlessness, when she is directed by her husband to use a definite vocabulary and subdued tone. Mr. Kashikar practically abandons all pretensions to the sanctity and decorum, when he rebukes his wife and asks her to maintain silence.

MRS. KASHIKAR. Exactly.

KASHIKAR. What do you mean, exactly? Hold your tongue. Can’t say a word!...

(Mrs. Kashikar is silenced.)

... 

MR. KASHIKAR (banging his gavel). Silence! Silence must be observed.

MRS. KASHIKAR (to Samant) Samant, all this about pan…

MR. KASHIKAR (banging his gavel). Silence must be observed while the court is in session. Can’t shut up at home, Can’t shut up here! (CPT 72, 77)

Shanta Gokhale observes that to retain a shred of self esteem, the least she must do is to glorify her own state making her testimony against Benare such a bitter diatribe (qtd. in Choudhury and Rajan 83). On the contrary, Benare was smart,
educated and good looking and was unmarried, all of which Mrs. Kashikar found objectionable and contemptible. How she has surreptitiously internalized the process of patriarchal dominion gets revealed, once she starts spitting venom against Benare:

Anyone who really wants to can get married in a flash...when you get everything without marrying...they just want comfort. They could not care about responsibilities. In my time even if a girl was snub nosed, sallow hunchbacked or anything whatever, she could still get married.

It’s the sly new fashion of women earning that makes everything go wrong. That’s how promiscuity has spread through our society....

(CPT 99-100)

One of the major feminist arguments states that a woman’s economic dependence is what deprives her of any political control. De Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex* says: “It is through gainful employment that woman has traversed most of the distance that separated her from the male; and nothing else can guarantee her liberty in practice. Once she ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her dependence crumbles; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator” (689). Mrs. Kashikar couldn’t have ever disclosed that she is at the receiving end of Mr. Kashikar’s continuous tirade of abuse and snubs. This is what makes her into a potential victim of a habitual victimizer, who asserts his rights of being a man and a husband to her. Confirming this internalization by a married Indian woman, John Stuart Mill states: “No slave is a slave to the same lengths, and in so full a sense of the word’, ‘as a wife is’” (qtd. in Ruthven 29).

Leela Benare doesn’t spare these criticizing males along with Mrs. Kashikar, hence, she retorts to them in the same tone. She introduces all her co-stars to Samant in their absence. She sarcastically refers to Mr. Kashikar as ‘Mr. Prime Objective’, Mrs. Kashikar as ‘Mrs. Hands that Rocks the Cradle’ and that the ‘Hands that Rocks the cradle has no cradle to rock.’ And that Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar adopted Balu to get away from boredom and made a slave out of him. She sarcastically introduces Sukhatme, one of her co-stars as: “An expert on the law. He’s 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 a court, swatting flies with legal precedents! Ponkshe is ‘Scientist, Inter failed’” (CPT 59). She gets critical of even Prof. Damle: “And we have an intellectual too. That means someone who prides himself on his books, 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 won’t dare” (CPT 59, 60). This side of Leela Benare’s personality discloses to us the hypocrisy of all the male characters. By the time the play ends, her muteness has overpowered her outspoken attitude. The unuttered ideas, semi-pronounced words or a definite refusal to speak are crucial to the understanding of Sarita and Kamala in the play Kamala, and Leela Benare and Mrs. Kashikar in Silence! The Court is in Session. Through his representation of these women, Tendulkar makes his readers contemplate over and inquire into women’s lack of assertion. Judith Butler responds to this query and provides a redefinition of gender which, while rooted in the discourse of binaries, allows one to see its perverted character and provides a room for its re-designation, thus proposing a novel perception of masculinity. “Gender”, according to Butler is produced and sustained by specific socio-political conditions and “intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities” (Gender 3).

The grooming of masculine and feminine identities in Indian framework confirms this notion. Without an agent [language], there can be no agency [Man] and hence no potential to initiate a transformation of relations of domination within a society (Butler 34). Monique Wittig, a French feminist, suggests that the language has the power to subordinate and exclude women. Language ranks among the concrete and contingent practices and institutions maintained by the choices of individuals and, hence, weakened by the collective actions of choosing individuals (qtd. in Butler 36).

The silence of women, as asserted by Lakoff, is often self-selected because speechlessness has traditionally been seen as a defining quality of womanhood. Sarita in Kamala and Leela, of present play, select this silence by choice at various moments in these plays. One takes the phone calls, prepares the best possible meals, arranges the homely comfort in true sense and stands still to take orders from the husband, while the other opts to remain mum in a crowd of devils. Lakoff maintains that even a woman determined to speak might not easily express herself in the idiom of the dominant culture. For men, the silencing of women has been the denial of equal social and political rights and access to most positions of public influence, either legally or by tradition (qtd. in Jaworski 219). At the same time, it is considered to be a violation of societal norms if an individual, be it a man or a woman, develops a strongly
Leela is seen as a threat in the play, because she is a woman with a distinct and powerful voice and also because she questions what she doesn’t approve of. This is why she earns opprobrium from both the men and the women. On one such occasion, Mrs. Kashikar says:

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 woman can behave with a man? And an unmarried woman?... Look how loudly she laughs! How she sings, dances, cracks jokes! And wandering alone with how many men, day in and day out! (CPT 100)

Silence is somewhat like Foucault’s concept of power, as it, too, shifts and moves. Power is supplanted by silence and this silence is implicated in power relations. Silence in political discourse is taken to be a tool or a strategy, especially when examined in different social contexts as has been done by Jaworski. It is used by dominant institutions to create mystery, uncertainty, passivity, and relinquishment. The same strategy is used against women. About women’s silence, Jaworski states that there is a societal silencing of dominated groups by other groups which have ambiguous status (qtd. in Carrette 32-33). All the male members of theatrical group in Silence! The Court is in Session work in tandem with each other to cause the first expose, and then join hands to ruin Leela’s reputation. So often, she is made passive by heart-breaking comments. Mr. Kashikar declares about Leela: “A sinful canker on the body of society—that’s my honest opinion of these grown up unmarried girls” (CPT 112). Sukhatme too tries to dislodge Leela’s enthusiasm: “The character of the accused is appalling. It is bankrupt of morality... Her conduct had blackened all social and moral values” (CPT 114).

While observing the disciplinary side of silence, Jaworski suggests that women’s silence can be explained in terms of a more encompassing theory of socio-political silencing. He argues that those who are defined as abnormal, dirty are the ‘other’, those who do not fit neatly into social categories are forced into silence. Women have been described historically as “deformed males” and as such have subsequently been silenced. Charles Courtney argues that women suffered on account of ‘disciplinary silence’. Children were controlled through rules concerning speech, but Courtney suggests that like no other group, women were consistently submitted to the tortures of forced silence (qtd. in Clair 24-26).
In order to avoid the possibility of alternative claims to dominance, everywhere and in all ages, it is patriarchy that has ruthlessly suppressed woman’s voice. Mackinnon sees patriarchal silence through horrors of sexual violence against women and children who are further silenced by patriarchal laws under the guise of freedom of speech (qtd. in Clair 84). Patriarchy, the rule of the male, allows room not only for physical dominance but also for psychological and emotional advantage of the male so that all possible avenues of female resistance are closed. This is analogous to Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952) that talks about the invisibility of black people, denial of equal opportunities, and apartheid. Tendulkar raises his voice against this *apartheid*. The relationship of Leela Benare with Prof. Damle is seen by other men only from one perspective, as all of them blame her and teach her the Gospel of morality and/or values. Leela Benare is not given any opportunity to express herself; she is only commodified. The hegemonic male values are thoroughly taken care of, thereby relegating a woman into silence. These males, including Prof. Damle, secretly wish to possess Leela Benare and even lust for her. The duplicity and hypocrisy of men in general is exposed by Tendulkar who seeks to re-inscribe the image of Leela Benare.

Man dominates speech everywhere and he draws rules for woman’s articulation, vocabulary, tone, pitch and modulation. It is the male taste that decides the agreeability and propriety of her utterances. He possesses the entire apparatus with which he could subjugate her. It is he who leads in the fields of political power, administration, public relations and media with all the parameters of judgment. Through the repression of the other, the male characters not only wish to reclaim their hegemonic position in Indian society, thereby acting as guardians and representatives of colonialism/imperialism, but they themselves end up as pawns and victims of the ordained patriarchal system. In the play, Sukhatme, at one point, says, “Mr. Ponkshe how would you define the moral conduct?” (CPT 81) A male asks another male for the relevance and reasonable conduct of a woman in the society.

The powerful voice as a gesture of rebellion and resistance is not recognized by men. Barbara Hill Rigney in *The Voices of Toni Morrison* (1991) says: “The central paradox is that the silence of women echoes with reverberation, speaks louder than words” (26). This echo is ignored even doubting their existence. The male control refuses to listen to them and does not allow them to speak. In fact, it is a
subversion of the silence, conventionally assigned to woman as her fate, while man enjoys the monopoly of speech. Man also does not understand this silence at times. He finds this enigmatic silence extremely stifling and threatening to his schemes, since he has no control over it. Underneath this silence, there lies a volcano ready to explode. Here again, Leela’s sobbing strikes hard at the male tendencies in general, and is a potent expression of her powerlessness to find voice for herself. The excitement on everyone’s face when Benare is in tears augments her muteness. The people around her lack total sensitivity, and witness the futility of her challenge, with a degree of perversity. Benare says:

Note it down. Note it down! Just take down note after note! (Her eyes are suddenly full of tears. Her voice is choked. She is agitated. Then, with tearful defiance) What can you do to me? Just try! (Tears flow freely from her eyes. Exit into wings.)

(Deeper silence. Except for Samant, everyone’s expression changes. A peculiar and cautious excitement breaks out on each face.) (CPT 94)

This deeper silence again has symbolic meaning; the inability of a woman to defend herself. Leela is now the subaltern, as she cannot speak or rather she is not allowed to speak. Silence and voice, however, do not necessarily stand for oppression and power, respectively. Silent Kamala in play Kamala sporadically becomes more expressive than outspoken Leela. But this is premeditated on the part of the male, who does not fancy listening to a speaking woman and is entrusted with the one who is silent. Everyday silencing of women involves a pattern of ordinary practices, creating models of goodness for women that incorporate destructive ideals of submissiveness, obedience, silence, and yielding to someone else’s will. Women are, in fact, placed outside masculine language, in the “feminine space of the unconscious”, the unspoken and unspeakable i.e. silence. Thus, women’s speech has been muted, devalued becoming indecipherable within the patriarchal interpretive models. Women necessarily live a contradiction: To be silent is to remain outside of history and culture. Yet, for women to speak or write is to be estranged from the truly ‘feminine’ self, to remain suppressed and contained within the language and culture of patriarchy (qtd. in Kramarae and Spender 235).

Being a dynamic complex of processes and practices, language identifies the norms concerning sex and gender. Such identification is so deeply embedded in our
culture that it becomes an active consent. As the most powerful and nuanced symbol, language is perhaps the primary means by which ideology of sexism is developed and reinforced (Jaggar and Young 139).

It is normative in its production and reproduction of social norms by way of its context, by way of its forms, and most particularly by way of its constitutive discursive practices. Women are paradoxically constituted and yet erased from the discourse. For feminists language is all important, as it is the structure of significances governing our lives. It contains and conveys the categories through which we understand ourselves and others and through which we become who and what we are. The language of various characters in the play reveals their respective standards and levels of knowledge. It is, indeed, an arena of political, feminist struggle to end sexist oppression by eradicating both the means by which oppression is carried out and the ideology that seeks to give legitimacy to it.

Linguistic and textual theories of women's writing implore whether men and women draw on language in different ways, depending on culture, biology, or socialization; or women can generate a new language of their own; or speaking, reading, and writing are all gender marked. In The Study of Women and Language, Nelly Furman explains, “It is through the medium of language that we define and categorize areas of difference and similarity, which, in turn, allow us to comprehend the world around us. Male-centered categorizations predominate in American English societies and subtly shape our understanding and perception of reality; this is why attention is increasingly directed to the inherently oppressive aspects for women of a male-constructed language system” (qtd. in Lodge 333-334). Analyzing the use of language by men and women, Robin Lakoff asserts that the ultimate effect of discrepancies between women’s language and men's language is that: “Women are systematically denied access to power, on the grounds that they are not capable of holding it as demonstrated by their linguistic behaviour; ...The irony here is that women are made to feel that they deserve such treatment, because of inadequacies in their own intelligence and/or education” (qtd. in Roman, Juhas and Miller 283).

Many women readily cling to their silent attitude since the inferior position bestows upon them certain questionable advantages, as noted by Simone de Beauvoir. In defining cultural roles, women are addressed as Miss, prior to their marriage thus identified in relation to their fathers, whereas after getting married, they are addressed
as Mrs. thus identified with their husbands. Men, on the contrary, are addressed as Mr. irrespective of their marital status. Women in the Indian subcontinent are expected to forgo their paternal surname after their marital status changes. Leela is criticized and ridiculed by Sukhatme for her connection with professor Damle. She is addressed as Mrs. Damle instead of Benare and seen only in relation to man: ‘Your name is Leela Damle!’ (CPT 97)

This male supremacy is questioned by Gerda Lerner in her The Creation of Patriarchy (1986) where she deliberates on the subjugation of women as a “conceptual error” hence proposing a radical restructuring of thought and analysis which, once and for all, accepts the fact that humanity consists in equal parts of men and women and the ‘experiences, thoughts and insights of both sexes must be represented in every generalization made about human beings’ (220).

Vijay Tendulkar’s plays essentially deal with the possibility of how women could possibly reclaim their feminine space and speech, of which they have dispossessed by men. The magnitude of the disintegration caused to the feminine gender depends on the degree of non-resistance offered by the victim. Tendulkar demonstrates how society adds to the depreciation of women as a human being and deprives them of most of the human rights related to life, liberty, speech and equality. Ms. Benare becomes a prey to male chauvinism, only an object of gratification for their physical lust, and once that is quenched, she is deserted and left to her own destiny, at the end.

In his preface to Miss Julie (1888), August Strindberg explains that the aristocratic Julie is sexually ‘mastered’ by her father’s servant ‘simply because he is a man’. Sexually, he is an ‘aristocrat’ (qtd. in Ruthven 29), setting up a prelude to the mastery of Leela Benare by Prof. Damle. Through Benare, Tendulkar remonstrates against crooked treatment of women by the hegemonic patriarchal forces. He is certainly on Benare’s side, and it seems he is supportive of her recalcitrance against the males, too. In this play, silence, at one level, characterizes the agony of muteness of the colonized Leela. The very act of silencing Lcela reminds us of Helen Cixous’s description of a Chinese story in her essay Castration and Decapitation, where General Sun Tse decides to use the beheading of two women commanders as a war strategy that forces the rest into total compliance, and they never make a mistake of repeating that offence, again. It is a form of education, a conditioning that consists of
trying to make a soldier out of a woman by force, the force that the history reserves for women, the “capital” force that is effectively “decapitation”. Women have no choice other than to be decapitated, and in any case, the moral is that if they do not actually lose their heads by the sword, they only keep them on condition that they lose them—lose them, that is, to complete silence, turned into automatons (42-43).

There are two images of Tendulkar’s Leela Benare, one of an extremely, fiercely articulate woman, and the other is that of a coercively silenced, decapitated woman as the masculine rule shatters her aspirations and freedom. It is her second image that stands parallel to Lacan’s notion of “phallocentrism”, which explains why a woman always exists outside language. If man operates under the threat of castration, if masculinity is culturally ordered by the castration complex, it might be said that the backlash, the return on women of this castration anxiety is its displacement as de-capitation, execution, of woman, or the symbolic loss of her head. Women are decapitated, their tongues are cut off and what they talk isn't heard, because it's the body that talks, and man doesn't hear the body (Cixous Castration 43-49).

The Judge, Mr. Kashikar, like commander, General Sun Tse, orders Ms Benare to abort her child as it is his conviction that to have the child without marriage is against the tradition of Indian culture, thus paving way for symbolic castration, a cutting of her tongue. The judgment passed against Ms. Benare seems to be absurd. Mr. Kashikar says:

> The crimes you have committed are the most terrible. There is no forgiveness for them... The morality which you have shown through your conduct was the morality you were planning to impart to the youth of tomorrow... It must be said that the school officials have done a work of merit in deciding to remove you from your job... No memento of your sin should remain for the future generations. Therefore this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed. (CPT 118-19)

The playwright very curtly exposes the hypocrisy and duplicity of Mr. Kashikar. He being in the judge’s seat should be rational in his decisions, but, instead of protecting the rights of Ms. Benare, he indulges in the game of harassment.
While dealing with this issue Tendulkar opts for play-within-a-play situation, a theatricality of art to examine the ironies of real life. This meta-theatrical element is used to objectively contemplate upon the predicament of Benare. Tendulkar believes that a happening under observation becomes the reality and reality becomes reality only when it is seen. The integration of the play-within-a-play creates an additional dimension that blurs the demarcation between reality and illusion. Tendulkar’s technique makes characters move back and forth from make-believe to naked reality. 

The important dimension in the play is how a mock-serious exercise turns hostile and tragic, as seen from the perspective of Benare. The theatre group is a miniscule cross-section of middle class society with representative members of the sub-strata. Their gestures, dialogues and mannerisms reflect their frustration, and repressed desires making them hostile and spiteful towards each other.

Benare, a spontaneous person with a joie de vivre, refutes social norms and so is easily isolated, even made a victim of a cruel game (in form of a mock trial) cunningly planned by her co-actors. She, akin to Miss Julie of Strindberg, does not fit in with her social class and rebels against the inferior status to which women are relegated. Women of her class are expected to behave in an aloof, respectable and non-sexual way, placing endless restrictions on them. Whether it is an aristocratic woman like Miss Julie or an Egyptian Queen Cleopatra, or, an educationist like Miss Benare of Tendulkar, all are accorded the status of whores, thus, usurping them off their speech. Benare is at a disadvantage, because she is a woman. Her private life, including her illicit love affair with Prof. Damle is exposed and publically dissected. Tendulkar leaves the correlation of illusion and reality, and shows his concern with the individual and society. In this mock trial, she is supposed to be arrested on suspicion of a crime, a grave crime of infanticide. Benare tries to face up to the allegation, without understanding the seriousness and conspiracy of her colleagues: “Who is serious? I am absolutely—lighthearted. I just got a bit serious to create the right atmosphere. For the court, that’s all. Why should I be afraid of a trial like this? (CPT 75) Sukhatme and Kashikar support her light heartedness as they converse:

SUHKATME. Kashikar, you have really picked some charge! A first class charge! There’s no fun in a case unless there is a really thundering charge!
KASHIKAR. Did you notice, also, Sukhatme, that this charge is important from the social point of view? The question of infanticide is one of great social significance. That is why I deliberately picked it. We consider society’s best interests in all we do. Come on Miss Benare.

SUKHATME [moving his lawyer’s gown about with an important air, and chewing pan]. Milord, in the interest of the smooth functioning of the matter before this court, I beseech the court for an adjournment of a quarter minute at the beginning, so that all present may spit out the pan in their mouths. (CPT 76)

Like Draupadi, Leela Benare, too, is silenced through this mock-trial. In The Mahabharata, Draupadi stands alone, arguing like a lady pundit, crying out for decency and pity in the name of the Kshatriya code, but her voice is not heard by anyone. She speaks and speaks for long, but is made silent and mute. Leela Benare finds herself in a similar situation. It explains that the patriarchal attitude of the society has not changed even a bit over the ages. Women are silenced whenever they articulate something that is unacceptable to the patriarchs. Like Draupadi, characters in Tendulkar’s play, literally pull off her clothes. She is in a sabha (court), where she is stripped (symbolic) of her clothes i.e. the harassment she suffers at the hands of other characters. She unsuspectingly finds herself trapped and almost every player of the theatrical group viz. Samant, Ponkshe, Kashikar, Mrs. Kashikar, Karnik, Rokde and even Prof. Damle in absentia, stands against her, witness to her misdemeanor and transgression. On one such occasion, Sukhatme, the performing lawyer poses very personal questions, which Benare is expected to respond to, before the court:

Can you tell the court how you came to stay unmarried to such a mature—such an advanced—age?... Let me frame my question somewhat differently. How many chances of marriage have you had so far in your life? And how did you miss them? Tell the court. (CPT 98)

Leela Benare couldn’t have responded to such personal queries, and how could she? So she preferred to maintain silence. In fact, it would be apt to say that she is forced into silence. Analyzing the silencing of women, Robin Lakoff argues that it is directly related to allocation of power. Silencing is always political (qtd. in Hall and Bucholtz 250). Being a dignified teacher, she fights and protests but loses in the end.
Draupadi, the heroine of *The Mahabharata*, was fiercely vocal and with her powerful articulation could silence the wise and the aged. But when she was pawned in the game of power, her fierceness met with an eerie silence maintained by the attendants. Benare’s raised voice is neither heard nor reciprocated. A woman is thus silenced either by male gaze, a concept of Laura Mulvey or, her body is used as an instrument for controlling her language.

Indian scriptures, epics and religious books depict that the traditional and cultural values are deliberately worked upon to make women silent. The protagonist Benare is pushed into pliability and fragility, especially when she is consistently reminded of the mythological and legendary positivism of mother and motherland. Masculine politics establishes a correlation between mother, a woman and motherland, thus glorifying the status of woman. By practising such proverbs, phrases meant only for women, males do not want to lose their supremacy. Mr Kashikar, in order to subdue, vanquish and weaken Leela, continually reminds her of her tradition and role in the society: “You’ve forgotten one thing. There is a Sanskrit proverb, ‘janani janmabhumishcha svargadapi gariyasi’. ‘Mother and the Motherland, both are even higher than heaven’” (CPT 79).

Kashikar, the man sitting in the judge’s seat usurps a higher position in the hierarchy, which gives him the opportunity to present Leela, ‘the other’ as deceitful and indulgent, with the help of other males. In Helen Cixous’ terms, Leela is ‘subjugated, castrated and decapitated’ to his so-called ‘imperial’ power. Kashikar’s speech or decisions given by him in the mock court trial adhere to the father-text, the male paradigm of thinking in colonial India. This father-text is understood to be taken as a set of normative rules, which gets legal, social, and cultural sanctions, investing a complete control in male citizens but also require from them an acceptable conduct. The ultimate demonstration of Kashikar’s (representative of all males) deafness to the female (Leela’s) voice is articulated when looking at his watch, he says: “The time is up. The accused has no statement to make. In any case, it would be of no use” (CPT 118). The word ‘no use’ very loudly conveys Leela’s speechlessness. This rejection to listen to someone is strongly correlated to the cultural deafness to female self-articulation, and testifies to a conscious severance of the two discourses which, socially imposed, prevent their mutual exchange and control, thus guarding the patriarchal hierarchy of gendered subjects.
Providing guidelines for conduct of women in his seminal text *Manusmriti*, Manu, on the one hand, states that women must be given honourable status in family, but on the other, he takes away many rights enjoyed by women during Vedic era as right to education, intellectual pursuit, widow-remarriage and participation in political and administrative affairs. By quoting scriptures, women are wrapped up in domestic sphere, and stringent, unavoidable laws for her dependence on males are enforced over them. Following the dictates of *Manusmriti*, Kashikar becomes critical of freedom of Benare and the overall behaviour of women in society. The contempt for Leela Benare is very much evident in Kashikar’s personal views, as he claims that the marriageable age for a girl should be lowered down to their puberty. Kashikar’s misogynistic attitude is clear in his remarks:

> All right. She’s not less than thirty-four. I’ll give it to 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. That’s my frank opinion, Sukhatme, my frank opinion. (CPT 98)

Another male character, Sukhatme, too, confirms Kashikar’s opinion: “The accused (Leela) has plotted to dynamite the very roots of our tradition, our pride in ourselves, our culture and our religion... Woman bears the grave responsibility of building up the high values of society. ‘*Na stri swatanryamarhat*’. Woman is not fit for independence...” (CPT 115) Ironically, all the lewd males quote liberally from the scriptures in order to silence the woman. The males take special delight in exposing Leela and then become eager spectators to witness the game of her exploitation. Leela becomes a victim of injustice done to her, as these very hypocritical males, if they got a chance, would like to take the place of Mr. Damle. While questioning the way *Manusmriti* has downgraded women, Tendulkar challenges men like Kashikar for their idiosyncrasies towards women.

It is at the junction of art, activism and social significance that theatre is seen as an apparatus of real transformation in the lives of women. It is an investigation of women’s own exclusive idiom, their own form, language and ways of communication. Tendulkar knows that the patriarchal order grants muteness to men as well, but this muteness is not a contrivance of oppression for them but an expressive means of their dominant position. At times, silent gestures of masculine gender
become symbolic of their authority and command. Even Prof. Damle’s continuous absence (an equivalent of silence) unmistakably specifies his authority, control and indifference. Tendulkar’s silences or pauses like his speeches and dialogues, serve as a device capable of providing a virtual position of women. His female characters speak the language locked between these words, absence of speech by ellipses, pauses and silences. The pauses speak more loudly about woman’s pain and psychological trauma, her subjugation, her inability to communicate, her inefficiency to find words in defense.

Tendulkar admits: “But speech pattern does not consist only of words; it also has a speech rhythm or style of speaking. A way of speaking, let us say. A personal way. An extra emphasis on certain words, broken sentences, broken words. Incomplete sentences. Even pauses between the words and sentences. And lastly a pitch of voice… These broken sentences, these pause gestures speaks of the subjugation of women in theatre, old and new and they being seen as objects” (CPT xxviii). Samik Bandyopadhyay comments on the same by pointing towards the conversation between Samant and Benare. The most moving of these comes in Act II, when Samant notices her:

SAMANT. She seems to have fallen asleep. Miss Benare, I mean.

BENARE [her eyes shut]. I’m awake. I can never, never sleep just when I want to. Never. (CPT 90)

Tendulkar’s creativity runs in Act III with the same fervor and the play ends with Benare completely losing her tongue (voice) like Philomela:

KASHIKAR. Good. Now prisoner Benare—

[She is quite still.]

Prisoner Benare, before the sentence is pronounced, have you anything to say about the charge that has been made against you?...

[She is as motionless as before. From somewhere in the background, music can be heard. The light changes. The whole court ‘freezes’ in the positions they are in at the moment. And the motionless Benare stands up erect.] (CPT 115-116)
Silencing has been imposed directly or indirectly and has helped in reinforcing and recreating gender ideology, which constructs both men and women as social subjects with well-defined roles. Women's discourse is made insignificant by men, since they are not allowed to speak in public.

Marsha Houston and Cheris Kramarae assert that silencing tactics operate in everyday practices to isolate and dis-empower people, whereas for Carmen Luke, women are excluded from the public sphere, speech and writing (qtd. in Kramarae and Spender 234-235). In Indian milieu, the imposed silence of women had been extensive, making women's oppositional voices absolutely and unequivocally suppressed. The other play Kamala attacks hypocrisy of journalism that instead of providing support to women, acts as a means of silencing them, making way for their segregation and disempowerment.

Tendulkar’s Kamala (1982) is a contemporary play inspired by a real life incident, and raises certain fundamental questions about the values of career-oriented younger generations. An altered scenario of global world prompts this newly built generation to sacrifice their principles. The play was staged for the first time at Kala Rang on 7th August 1981, and was translated into English by Priya Adarkar (Madge 183). Kamala is based on the first-hand experience of an Indian Express journalist, Ashwini Sarin, who buys a tribal woman and writes a series of articles exposing the prostitution trade and involvement of large scale politicians in it during the early 1980s. Kamala, in the play, moves from rural to an urban hypocritical world, ignorant about her fate. She would have to sell her body and lose both her dignity and psychosomatic balance if her auction had taken her to a regular customer.

Another dimension of the play is the husband-wife relationship between Sarita and Jaisingh. The husband is devoid of any respect or love for the wife. Sarita's politicized education does not provide her any voice. Her effort becomes futile when she wants Kamala to be out of her ragged clothes as her voice goes unheard by her husband. Kamala is treated as an object, a performing machine. She has to perform her role as the male ego wants it: to become a lower being or the second sex. There seems to be no significant difference between an illiterate, rustic woman and an educated urban woman.

The play also satirizes popular and sensational journalism, where Jaisingh Jadhav remains indifferent to the humane sacrifices and human values in the name of
humanity itself. Tendulkar’s male protagonist Jaisingh Jadhav uses Kamala as a step-ladder merely to get promotion in his journalistic career. Tendulkar is interested in exposing the meanness and pettiness of Jaisingh, and also his unethical professional practices, all of which are reflected in the way he uses his manipulative skills to exploit an illiterate woman from a rural background. Jaisingh says:

It’ll be the end. Our entire plan will fall flat. My editor and I have put together this thing with great care... What’s so unusual about the Luhardaga flesh market? Women are sold in many places like that, all over the country. How do you think all the red light districts could operate—without that? That’s not the point. The point is how we project Luhardaga—the technique of it. The art lies in presenting the case—not in the case itself! Keep watching... (CPT 15)

Jai Singh’s masculinity in Kamala is a concept in the making and it is controlled and constructed by the patriarchal order, which imposes certain discursive prototypes on men and bludgeons them to live up to them. During a telephonic conversation, his dominating tendencies become conspicuous:

Jai Singh speaking. Is everything ready? Very Good. Everything is fine here. Arre Baba, all we have to do now is to put the bride in the mandap. Didn’t you get it? [Laughs.] At five O’clock exactly. On the dot. Keep the photographers ready. Okay? Bye. [Puts down the receiver.] (CPT 21)

This inarticulate feminine vacuum becomes a semantically live area producing meaning that undermines the entire concept of female territory, which is subjected to revisionism. The alternative concepts and notions are formulated regarding language itself. Dale Spender suggests that a different order of classification of writing is possible, depending on whether it belongs to men or women. For generations women have been silenced in patriarchal order, unable to have their meanings encoded and accepted in the social repositories of knowledge. The process has been a cumulative one, with silence built upon silence. Women are muted because men are in control of the language, the meanings, and the knowledge of women cannot be accounted for outside that male control (74-77). Here, Jai Singh controls both the language and the meanings.
This silence of women is explored by the feminists as their discussion of language emphasizes the ways in which the content of what is said often trivializes women. For feminists and linguists, women are marked and erased as subjects in discursive practices carrying implication of inferiority and subjugation. They are shown as objects in texts, not as speaking subjects. In her talk with her uncle Kakasaheb, Sarita uses such words as ‘slave’, ‘object’, and ‘rule’ to describe the condition imposed on women by the male domination, which forms and asserting the paradigms of women articulation. Kamala, as a commodity, sold and purchased in the flesh market, is a victim of that process of objectification. The conversation reveals her position:

JAI SINGH. I bought her—in the Luhardaga Bazaar in Bihar.

SARITA. Huh? (She can’t understand) Bought her?

JAI SINGH. Yes. For two hundred and fifty rupees. Even a bullock costs more than that.

(Sarita is stunned)

(Brightening as he notices her reaction) They sell human beings at this Bazaar Luhardaga beyond Ranchi. Human beings. They form open auction for all sorts of ages. (CPT 14)

Tendulkar has envisioned Sarita in such a way that she only receives the phone calls meant for him. She at times, comes across merely as an unprotesting follower of her husband. In a similar correspondence, Shobha De’s Karuna, the protagonist of Socialite Evenings, becomes the perfect example of the misery of women in Indian context. She suffers due to the callous and non-responsive attitude of her husband, who treats her as a mere object subjected to his will. As a result, there is a complete loss of her voice, her identity. Sarita is the landlady of the house, and as such occupies a limited space/territory. She is akin to the educated and England returned heroine of Lakshminarayan Misra’s Adhi Rat (a Hindi novel)—who is made into a dumb puppet in the hands of her husband. Sarita’s position in the house under the aegis of dominating husband gets visible, when she talks to her uncle:

KAKASAHEB. Someone. I didn’t ask who. He didn’t say, either. What do you want the name for? He’ll phone again tomorrow.

SARITA. I have to write down each phone call.
KAKASAHEB. Well I’ve just taken three. How many are you going to write down?

SARITA. That’s the way you see it. My husband sees it differently.

If I say they didn’t tell me their names, he gets angry with me for not asking.

(The phone rings. Sarita goes and picks it up.) (CPT 3)

Certain feminists, drawing upon Lacanian psychoanalysis, claim that language is inherently male-based and, silence, a space of resistance and escape from patriarchal regulations make the women alienated and muted (Kramarae and Spender 235). It is not nature or any physical reality that determines women’s inferior position, but a thought difference, a “signified difference”. The only real difference Lacan asserts is that women do not know what they are saying (qtd. in Nye 172). They will always speak with the borrowed authority and always have trouble with analytical knowledge of “what all to say”. Women show more preference for ‘modal’ structures such as ‘might have been’ indicating uncertainty. They may use different dialects or write in a vernacular, while men write a more formal language. Men control conversation not only by veto but also by showing lack of interest. This control is not a peculiarity of male/female relations but also of any other power relations. To speak is to take power and women, as Beauvoir noted, fail to assert themselves here as in other areas (qtd. in Nye 173). Jadhav’s disinterested and commanding attitude towards his wife Sarita demonstrates his control over language:

SARITA. She is asking me to lend her one of my saris.


Don’t give her anything.

[Sarita a little dampened by his anger]

I tell you, don’t give her a thing without asking me.

(CPT 21)

The patriarchal domination is often based on ideological foundations according to Bell Hooks. She says that within the feminist circles, silence is often seen as the sexist and criticized as an expression of woman’s submission to patriarchal authority (qtd. in M Ferguson 337). In Talking Back, Hooks argues that
speaking out is not a simple gesture of freedom in a culture of domination. There would be no need to even speak of the oppressed and exploited coming to voice, articulating and redefining reality, if there were not oppressive mechanisms of silencing, suppressing and censoring (16).

Women remain inarticulate within social structure, according to Edward Ardener, forming a muted group, whose model of the world exists at deeper levels (qtd. in Greene and Kahn 10). It is as though a woman exists in the masculine universe as a convenient other to the male subject, where she is faced with a problem of spatiality. The conceptual pair of centre-margin, in its relation to contiguous pairs like speech-silence and presence-absence defines the relative position of the feminine gender in any given set-up. Men, the dominant group for maintaining its dominance, resist listening to the ‘muted group’, the women. Those in power must continue to exclude the muted group’s experiences from being represented in the language system and keep the muted group from contributing to the creation of the language. Language is power and if those in power want to keep their dominance, they must hold tightly to their control of the language. Patriarchal oppression imposes definite social standards of femininity, making them natural for every woman. Whether it is Sarita or Kamala, a woman who doesn’t comply with the set pattern is considered and criticized to be unfeminine and abnormal. Judith Butler says: “When a member of muted group dares to raise her voice, refuses to confirm to androcentric modes of behavior…she is termed as deviant…and excluded from the patriarchal symbolic order” (qtd. in Culler 102). Muteness occupies the central position in the construction of leading women characters in the play under study. Sarita’s presence is ignored by her authoritative husband who does not listen to her response about Kamala’s whereabouts in the house:

JAI SINGH. Wake her up.

SARITA. She’s only just gone off to sleep.

JAI SINGH. Never mind. Wake her up and send her here.

I want to talk to her.

[Sarita stands where she is for a moment.]

What did I just say? Cannot you hear? (CPT 19)
The production of silence like the production of speech, at another level, can be an ideological struggle. One attends not only to the speaker, but also to the meaningful absence of the words. The dominant section of the society politically downgrades females and denies them a voice so that they might not articulate and assert their ideas. They are even denied their fundamental rights. Mary Wollstonecraft, however, believes that both men and women are responsible for the lack of equal educational opportunities. Women, due to the pleasure of the attention of men, actually preferred being considered as objects rather than as rational beings. She says:

Women are told from their infancy, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives. (9-10)

Eventually, women are mythified through various social processes. The status of Sarita as well as Kamala thoroughly reveals such a process of de-subjectification. The female protagonists of Manju Kapur, like Vijay Tendulkar, a contemporary Indian feminist novelist, are mostly educated, aspiring individuals. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they manage to carve out an identity, an individual voice for themselves. They are all qualified women with faultless backgrounds, but remain caged within the confines of a conservative society.

Kasturi, in Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*, exemplifies typical feminine attitude. For her, marriage is a religious and social institution, where love does not become its foundation. She has a superb domestic sensibility and her cooking is enjoyed by her anglicized, educated but aloof husband. Similarly, Jaya in Shashi Deshpande’s *That long Silence*, is a typical underprivileged housewife. All these women do not have their say, their voice. Not only Jaisingh, but, his friend Jain also joins hands with him, when he laughs in a sardonic manner while talking to Sarita: “Hi, Bhabhiji, I mean, English ‘hi’ to him, and a Marathi ‘hai’ to you. This warrior against exploitation in the country is exploiting you. He’s made a drudge out of a horse-riding independent girl from a princely house, ‘Hai’, ‘Hai’ (That’s him to Jaisingh). Shame on you! Hero of anti-exploitation campaign makes slave of his wife” (CPT 17).
Jain’s remark evidently elucidates the kind of reputation Sarita has in her household, bringing into focus the slavish treatment of Jaisingh. He completely ignores his wife’s existence. Conversely, Anita Desai in *Where Shall We Go This Summer* introduces hypersensitive Sita, a comfortably placed wife looking for diversion. Desai’s another novel *The Village by the Sea*, presents Lila, trapped by the chains of housekeeping, who breaks away from the traditional notions of homemaker; one who is not averse to household chores, yet one without whose efforts the home would surely have collapsed (Dhawan 27, 43). Sarita’s opposition to Jaisingh’s pronouncement of taking Kamala to an orphanage wakes up the dominant male chauvinist and he says, “It is I who take decisions in this house and no one else” (*CPT* 42). What Simone de Beauvoir says in her *The Second Sex* about the modern men applies to Jaisingh as well: “The men of today show a certain duplicity of attitude which is painfully lacerating to women; they are willing on the whole to accept women as a fellow being, an equal; but they require her to remain the inessential” (291).

The journalists are known for writing the truth, but Tendulkar has been able to probe deep into the corruption rampant in the profession of journalism as well as the journalists. The ambitious Jaisingh is janus-faced. By bringing Kamala to his press conference, he not only indulges in commoditization of the woman himself, but also invites and prompts others to do the same. Tendulkar criticizes this kind of objectification and ascertains his disapproval of the masculine construction, which doesn’t allow women to enter the male linguistic codes. He thus provides them a platform in the culturally sanctioned, imperialistic and heterosexual matrix. Jaisingh’s performative and verbal silencing of Sarita is a process which is meant to endorse his patriarchal position. He acts here as a representative of the law-of-the-father imposing upon her the obligatory tranquility, which Indian society considers as a characteristic of femininity, and which discourages native female subjects. For Gayatri Spivak, the subaltern as a female cannot be heard or read and she cannot speak either as she states in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” She uncovers the double oppression of native women caught between dominations of native patriarchy and imperialist ideology of west. Whereas, in her critique of Western Feminists writing, Chandra Talpade Mohanty in *Third World Women* argues: “Discourse of representation should not be confused with material realities. Since the native woman is constructed with multiple social relationships and positioned as a product of the cultural specificities of class
and caste, it should be possible to locate traces and testimony of women’s voice” (qtd. in Ashcroft 44). Here, a woman protests only in form of resolutions that shatter with a passage of time. Sarita complains:

> But a day will come, Kakasaheb, when I will stop being a slave. I’ll no longer be an object to be used and thrown away. I’ll do what I wish, and no one will rule over me. That day has to come. And I’ll pay whatever price I have to pay for it. *(CPT 52)*

It can be argued that, though Indian patriarchy sandbags women into silence, it simultaneously gives them a powerful instrument with which the “weaker sex” could threaten the allegedly stable identities that men enact. In his construction of textual gender identities, it is these patriarchal codes of silence that Tendulkar plays with. In the male-oriented system of signs, woman’s meanings are distorted and prevaricated; her truth misinterpreted and falsified; and for her rights, she must get concurrence from a super male ego. Her voice is ignored, unheard or contradicted. The contradiction between women’s centrality and active role in creating society and their marginality in the meaning-giving process of interpretation and explanation has been a dynamic force, causing women to struggle against their condition (Lerner 5).

Giving justification for the role of women in household and reproduction, Aristotle states quite bluntly, that women are inferior to men: “The male is by nature superior, the female inferior, and one rules, the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind” (6). He further makes women silent by maintaining that like men, women do have the rational soul but are unable to overrule their emotional soul. The dialogues of Lasthenia and Plato in The Republic disclose the status women had in Athens. Lasthenia alludes to Socrates’ ideas, which accords lower rank to women: Now one finds all kinds of diverse desires in slaves, pleasures, and pains mostly in children, women, household slaves, in those of the inferior majority who are so called free. Plato responds extending his support for Socrates as he says: Socrates is talking about women as they were in Athens in his times, and as they still are today, women who have been oppressed by men and kept in seclusion (qtd. in Kraut 133).

Whether it is Aristotle’s Politics or Plato’s The Republic, the representation of women in these important philosophical texts reflects the condition of women ages back. Tendulkar’s woman of 20th century validates the inferior status imposed upon
her by hypocritical men. Criticizing the practice of slavery by means of showing sale and purchase of Kamala, Tendulkar becomes pungent in his annotations. The following conversation between Sarita with Kakasaheb declares the real state of her condition at home. Sarita announces:

I am going to present a man who in the year 1982 still keeps a slave, right here in Delhi. Jaisingh Jadhav. I am going to say this man’s a great advocate of freedom. And he brings home a slave and exploits her. Listen to the story of how he brought home the slave Kamala and made use of her. The other slave he got free—not just free—the slave’s father shelled out the money—a big sum. (CPT 46)

Indian marriage expects from a woman not only to leave her own home, but to live amongst strangers; she also brings fortune in form of dowry for them. Sarita hints towards this practice prevalent in the Indian society. Upendranath Ashk’s _Alag Alag Raste_ (Separate Ways 1954) has a young woman protagonist accepting her husband’s co-wife, the way Sarita of _Kamala_ does. On the other hand, his _Svarg ki Jhalak_ (1939) illustrates rejection of an educated woman in favour of traditional housewife (Dalmia 27). This educated woman is rejected because she may raise her voice and question him. These works highlight the pathetic condition of women as wife, and Tendulkar pertinently brings forth the reasons for this subjugation—the inarticulation. Sarita’s knowledge of egotistical insincerity of her husband, and her realization of irrelevance of her being becomes clear in the following lines when she declares to her uncle: “But you did give me away, didn’t you? Then that’s that. Do you think he is going to change—just because you tell him to? I tried that once—I got so fed up, I said I was going back to Phaltan. What was the result? He started booking my ticket” (CPT 7).

An analogous disposition of Shobha De’s _Second Thoughts_ is about Maya, an oppressed wife, considered as a mere object by her husband Ranjan. Though an engineer, Maya is not allowed to take up even a part-time job. Instead, her husband again and again reminds her of “tradition” thus making her completely silent. Jaisingh, too, exercises his authority over Sarita as well as on Kamala rightly practising what Lord Acton’s famous aphorism says: “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely” (qtd. in Hofstede 113). As Jaisingh considers himself to be absolutely powerful; he believes that everyone else is non-existent.
Sarita, an educated woman of contemporary Indian society finds herself in the domestic trap. Here, Kamala becomes a catalyst in Sarita’s transformation. Sarita refuses to be in the state of dumbness after a shocking communication with Kamala, and a vehement and sudden realization:

KAMALA. I said, how much did he buy you for?

SARITA. Me? Look here, Kamala [changes her mind, and sits down beside her] For seven hundred.

KAMALA. My god! Seven hundred?

SARITA. Why? Was it too little?

KAMALA. It was an expensive bargain, memsahib. If you pay seven hundred, and there are no children....

[Sarita assumes a sad expression.]

Then he has to pay for clothes, and food. He must be very unhappy. Really.

SARITA. How many children do you have, Kamala?

KAMALA. I’ll have as many as you want. And work hard as you want. I can work hard...from morning to evening. Does he have property of his own, memsahib? (CPT 34)

Sarita breaks her silence after the insight awarded by Kamala, and refuses to allow her husband to take Kamala for the conference: “Kamala is not going to come with you...Kamala is not going with you. She’s going to stay here...I am telling this you very seriously. Kamala is going to stay here...She’ll stay here like Kamalabai does” (CPT 41).

Kamala, the “silent subaltern” now momentarily and metaphorically becomes vocal through Sarita, the childless woman. The pauses and silences are visible in the behaviour of these women characters in Kamala. In a theatrical performance, such gestures express a lot more than the supposed conversation. Keir Elam in Semiotic of Theatre and Drama, significantly points out that in traditional dramatic performance, the body of an actor acquires its mimetic and representational powers by becoming something other than itself, more and less than individual (84). The verbal transposition between Kamala and Sarita reveals the pain through these pauses:
SARITA. What little ones?

KAMALA. Children.

SARITA. We don’t have any. [Kamala falls silent.] Why? Why are you silent?

KAMALA. No reason. [Pauses] Gods ways are strange, such a big house… and...

SARITA. (Theatrically, enjoying herself). Yes, Kamala. (CPT 34)

The patriarchal bias is sometimes shrewdly camouflaged in the arguments which are in favour of women’s freedom. The auction of an illiterate rural woman (Kamala) is not very different from the marriage transaction of an educated urban woman (Sarita). Both are ‘bought’ as Kamala states: “The master bought you; he bought me, too. He spent a lot of money on the two of us” (CPT 35).

The man remains the ruler; woman, the ruled. He remains the master, regardless of whether he marries a woman or buys her from a flesh market. In fact, a married woman finds that she is commodified, bought and sold in the open market. Kamala does convey that it is her duty and also that of Sarita to keep the master happy and “prosperous”. She even finalizes a deal on her own accord with Sarita, saying: “Fifteen days of the month, you sleep with the master; the other fifteen, I’ll sleep with him. Agreed?” (CPT 35) Kamala thus inadvertently inherits the male-dominance since she considers keeping the male happy as the foremost concern of a woman. She herself is like that, and advocates such a practice by the other women, too.

Tendulkar frames the title of the play in Kamala’s name because of her role to transform not only Sarita but the whole lot of women in Indian society. Though on the surface, the protest seems to be brewing, the inner working of Sarita’s mind highlights the subdued and silent status of women. One’s identification is at certain times revealed by another person whom he thinks to be his replica. Sarita identifies Kamala as her imitatio and discloses:

I was asleep. I was unconscious even when I was awake. Kamala woke me up. With a shock. Kamala showed me everything. Because of her, I suddenly saw things clearly. I saw that the man I thought my partner was the master of a slave. I have no rights in this house. Because I am a slave. Slaves don't have rights… Dance to their master's whim.
Laugh, when he says, laugh. Cry, when he says, cry. When he says pick up the phone, they must pick it up. When he says, come to a party, they must go. When he says lie on the bed—they... [She is twisted in pain.] (CPT 46)

Status is the major social structure that administers the social interaction. The position a person occupies, significantly determines how he or she will be defined and treated. Roles are performed according to the social norms which subsequently consider the participation of women in theatre as both indecent and vulgar. The marginalization of women in performative arts confirms the inferior status of woman as a commodity, a sign which later on, paves the way for their further muteness. Even in Hindi drama, playwright Jaya Shankar Prasad presents two kinds of images of women, the first one is an embodiment of beauty, modesty, sacrifice, and the other ambitious, proud and dominating. Surender Verma’s Draupadi, also, has the woman who is the object of male gratification. The two extremes of representation of women in literature nullify their status. Again, Tendulkar through his plays identifies this objectification ruthlessly, striking hard at the roots of the crisis. In Marathi theatre and literature, women are represented as members of family and household, collectively making them a vulnerable segment of society. The representation of issues and problems pertaining to women is in terms of what men think about them and how they perceive them. C. Coelho remarks: “In his portrayal of human relations and tensions, Tendulkar depicts the violent tendency of egoistical man and equally self-centered society” (qtd. in Dhawan 34). Women’s struggles, failures and successes are determined on male’s perception and evaluation and they are made silent through representation.

When Kakasaheb informs Sarita about the attitude of men in the Indian society, and suggests how women like Kamala are treated as mere pawns in the game, she shows the potential only with a pitiable response: “Not just Kamala, Kakasaheb. Me too...” (CPT 43). The evolution of Tendulkar’s women attains a new dimension when Sarita utters a series of protests. She makes a declaration: “I’ll no longer be an object to be used and thrown away. I’ll do what I wish, and no one will rule over me” (CPT 52). The feminist words of Tendulkar articulated by Sarita mark the beginning of her freedom:

Why? Why can’t men limp behind? Why aren’t women ever the masters? Why can’t a woman at least ask to live her life the same way
as a man? Why must only a man have the right to be a man? Does he have one extra sense? A woman can do everything a man can. (CPT 47)

Sarita, thus, comprehends the journey initiated by Kamala, with a will to break off her chains of slavery, penetrates through the citadel of male hegemony, and awaits a new future: “That day has to come. And I’ll pay whatever price I have to pay for it” (CPT 52). Her words focus on the evolutionary process of Tendulkar’s women characters. In Tendulkar’s theatre the women characters undergo a series of sufferings and tortures as victims of the hegemonic power-structure.

The plight of Indian women is conveyed by Josephine Butler:

Helpless, voiceless, hopeless. Their helplessness appeals to the heart, in somewhat the same way in which the helplessness and suffering of a dumb animal does, under the knife of a vivisector. Somewhere, halfway between the martyr saints and the tortured ‘friend of man’, the noble dog, stand it seems to me, these pitiful Indian women, girls, children, as many of them are. They have not even the small power of resistance which the western woman may have.... (qtd. in Loomba 144)

The struggle to end domination, the individual struggle to resist colonization, to move from object to subject is expressed in an effort to establish a liberatory voice...it demands paradigm shift—something that we learn to talk, to listen, to hear in new ways (Hooks 15). Tendulkar has performed his part by posing such questions, by condemning this kind of representation of women. One of the cardinal matters in the play Kamala is related to an innocent question from Kamala to Sarita, asking for her price. This query discloses the respective positions of these two women. Tendulkar himself admits the authenticity of the query, as he distinctly remembers that the article contained a paragraph where the tribal girl innocently questions a well-educated and liberated housewife as to what amount she has been bought for by her master, later becoming inspiration to make the play Kamala, which sought to depict the slavish condition of Indian women in marriage.

Whether it is Leela Benare or Sarita or Kamala or Mrs. Kashikar or Kamalabai, a woman is invariably pushed into silence. She has to find her voice for breaking the shackles of mythological and conventional ideologies. Bell Hooks
suggests that it is crucial to produce speech that is compelling and demands to be heard, and is allowed to be circulated (qtd. in Kramarae and Spender 236).

Tendulkar objects to the marginalization of women in the interconnecting system of ‘sexual politics’ and ‘power politics’. Those who are in power, deconstruct the conventional thought and values. It is evident through the evolution of women’s silence that being silent and becoming silenced are two different things. The ideology and power structures that questions woman stand exposed and vulnerable before an alternative system of ideas that develops with a corresponding feminine sign system. Sarojini Naidu, speaking at an Indian National Conference in Calcutta in 1906, had once said:

The word ‘education’ is most misunderstood word in any language...
The instruction being merely accumulation of knowledge, might indeed lend itself to conventional definition, but education is immeasurable, beautiful indispensable atmosphere in which we live and move and have our being... Your fathers in depriving your mothers of that immemorial birthright have robbed you, their sons, of your just inheritance... Educate your women and the nation will take care of itself for it is as true today as it was yesterday... the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. (qtd. in Kumar 50)

Tendulkar wants this immeasurable education, where women can speak and men hear without any bias. There is undoubtedly the politics of dominant voice involved in making women silent and not allowing their voices to be heard. Silence that has been used as a machination to downgrade and alter ‘capable’ into ‘culpable’ has to be challenged.

In the contemporary global and transitional phase, the modern Indian society needs to emphasize the redesigning of gender roles. Since language keeps evolving, efforts should be initiated for the enhanced representation of woman in literature and introduction of women writings and women authors. Women should be allowed to become more self-assured and generate literature in which they can speak in their voice, in which they are heard and acknowledged. As language is an important component of culture, in the next chapter, we shall discuss how other significant tools of culture in the hands of dominant males run the course of human existence while demeaning women.