

Language as a Tool of Patriarchal Discipline: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Power, Knowledge, and Female Silencing in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session*

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Abstract

*The present study is an inquiry into Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session*: A Joint Theoretical Perspective of Michel Foucault's Theory of Discourse and Power/Knowledge and Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study explores the role of language in patriarchal control through the creation of social truths, the regulation of female identity, and the silencing of women's voices. The play's mock courtroom is analyzed as a Foucauldian disciplinary space where discourse creates knowledge and shapes Miss Benare as a socially deviant subject instead of acknowledging her as a complex individual. In addition, the study uses van Dijk's CDA model to explore ideological strategies such as lexicalization, categorization, polarization, presupposition, actor representation and the ideological square which normalize male authority and marginalize female agency. Words such as "accused", "character", "crime" and "morality" are ideological tools that the study says turn social prejudice into accepted truth. Courtroom discourse studies demonstrate the reproduction of patriarchal ideology through language and the power of discourse as an instrument of control over identity, morality and representation.*

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Foucault, Van Dijk, Discourse, Patriarchy, Gender, Ideology, Female silence.

INTRODUCTION

Language is more than just a way to communicate - it's a powerful tool that helps create and maintain social identities, ideologies, and systems of power. Today discourse theorists argue that language actively constitutes social reality, determining what counts as truth, morality and normality. Language can be used in societies where men have more power to control and judge women according to cultural expectations. Novels and plays provide good examples for studying these social processes because they both reflect and criticize the social structures governing people's interaction. *Silence! The Court is in Session* by Vijay Tendulkar (1978) is one such literary work that shows how patriarchal power works through language and not just physical coercion. The play is set in a mock court, where the protagonist, Miss Benare is tried. But the people in the court don't look for the truth, they write a story to make her look immoral and abnormal. They do not characterize her with facts but with recurring accusations, judgmental language and labels that place her into simple moral boxes. The bogus courtroom represents the generation of knowledge and the validation of authority through language, as well as the disciplining of women who fail to meet traditional gender expectations. This study examines the linguistic construction of patriarchal ideology in *Silence! The Court is in Session* by Michel Foucault's theory of power/knowledge and discourse, Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis and Michele Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. It examines how language creates truth, legitimizes male dominance and sustains unequal gender relations. In contrast to other studies that focus on themes of oppression, this study focuses on specific language strategies such as lexical choices, pronouns, labelling and questioning to demonstrate how language actively constructs gender inequality. In this way, it contributes to feminist literary criticism by revealing language as a major tool of patriarchal power. Language is not only a mirror of social reality but an active instrument in shaping and maintaining social reality. The study emphasizes the need for a careful examination of language in order to understand its role in the construction and maintenance of social power structures. It also demonstrates how literary works can be used to critique and challenge these structures and how language can be used to promote social change. It shows, in the end, that language is a powerful tool. It can be used to oppress and to liberate. It is up to us to use it in a way that promotes equality and justice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary feminist scholarship has increasingly stressed that gender inequality is produced and sustained through discourse, cultural representations, institutional practices and systems of knowledge, rather than through biological differences alone. According to feminist scholars, gender identities are socially constructed through ideological processes which shape what are considered appropriate forms of femininity and masculinity and sideline those who challenge patriarchal norms (McRobbie, 2025). This view aligns with Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity, which conceptualizes gender as a repeated social performance rather than an innate identity. Together, these approaches demonstrate how gender identities are actively constructed and unequal power relations are reproduced by language and discourse. The connection between discourse and patriarchal power is most obvious in *Silence! Court is in Session*, language as a mechanism of social control. According to McRobbie (2025) dominant cultural narratives create ideological constructions of gender that determine the moral and social parameters. These constructions are thus mirrored in the courtroom discourse of Tendulkar's play where Miss Benare

is judged not for breach of legal principles but for transgression of patriarchal expectations of womanhood. Her independence, sexuality and refusal to conform to conventional gender roles make her a symbol of moral deviance. Rather than evaluating her actions in an objective manner, the courtroom participants produce a socially acceptable discourse that rationalizes her humiliation and exclusion. Thus, Benare's identity is no longer an expression of her lived experience but a product of patriarchal discourse.

Similarly, Kusugal (2024) argues that Benare represents the increased marginalization of women in patriarchal societies, where women are held to unfair standards of morality, while male responsibility is largely ignored. The study reveals patriarchal institutions control female identity through surveillance, public judgement and social exclusion. This argument is consistent with Foucault's (1977) notion of disciplinary power, which argues that institutions exercise power by surveillance, classification and normalization of individuals in terms of the dominant values of society. The mock court in the play is a disciplinary institution that constructs a socially acceptable "truth" about Benare through discourse and not fact. Her identity is constructed through accusations, interrogation and moral evaluation, illustrating how power works through the production of knowledge about people (Foucault, 1977). The discursive construction of gender identity can also be conceptualized in terms of van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (1998) which asserts that dominant groups maintain their power through the control of discourse and the production of ideological differences between the "self" and the "other." This process is replicated in courtroom proceedings, where male participants present themselves as the protectors of morality, while simultaneously presenting Benare as immoral and socially dangerous. Such ideological polarization legitimizes patriarchal authority by presenting its judgements as objective truth, rather than ideological interpretation.

Although Kusugal (2024) makes a compelling case for the marginalization of women in the play, the study's focus on the specific linguistic strategies through which patriarchal dominance is discursively produced is limited. Such a limitation highlights the demand for a discourse-oriented analysis that investigates how lexical choices, labelling, evaluative language and ideological representations promote or reinforce gender inequality. Recent feminist scholarship also demonstrates how discourse is a site for negotiation, contestation and regulation of gender identities, both in institutional and digital spaces. As Peña-Fernández et al. (2025) argue, language constructs ideological borders by delineating what can and cannot be said about gender and feminism. Their findings show that discourse is not only an expression of social beliefs but also a process of actively constructing collective identities through legitimizing some values and marginalizing others. This argument supports van Dijk's (1998) view that ideological discourse reproduces social inequality through positive representations of dominant groups and negative representations of marginalized groups. A similar thing is happening in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, courtroom participants set themselves up as defenders of morality, while constructing Benare as the immoral 'other'. Accusations, questioning and moral evaluation legitimize patriarchal authority in the discourse. Personal choices are made evidence of social deviance.

In a similar vein, Schindel (2026) emphasizes that identities are continuously produced and regulated through social expectations and discursive practices. The study shows that individuals are judged against socially acceptable standards, generating mechanisms of surveillance which foster conformity. This view is very similar to Foucault's (1977) theory of disciplinary power in which people learn to accept dominant norms through observation and normalization. In Tendulkar's play, the courtroom serves as a disciplinary space for the public examination and classification of Benare within patriarchal definitions of respectable femininity. Her pregnancy as

a single woman, her independent career, and her refusal to conform to traditional gender roles put her outside the bounds of social acceptability and left her open to public condemnation. Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity further explains this process, suggesting that Benare's refusal to perform traditional femininity results in her exclusion from patriarchal definitions of moral womanhood.

Chowdhury (2025) also examines the institutional regulation of women, arguing that gender inequality is reproduced through the daily expectations that inform women's behavior, emotional expression and social roles. Institutions do not just rely on overt discrimination but they normalize particular forms of femininity through subtle judgements and behavioral expectations. This perspective is consistent with the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Lazar (2007) which views discourse as a social practice that builds and maintains unequal gender relations. Courtroom language in the play classifies Benare with labels of immorality, shame and social irresponsibility, and turns her personal identity into a question of morality. While Benare tries to counter these accusations, her voice is constantly interrupted and marginalized, demonstrating how patriarchal discourse limits women's agency while validating male authority.

Kubes (2026) uses feminist theorizing to demonstrate that systems of knowledge and institutional authority reproduce structural inequalities through the power to define truth and legitimacy. This argument is similar to the Foucault's (1977) concept of power/knowledge which suggests that knowledge is socially constructed and used to serve the interests of dominant institutions. In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, the courtroom takes on the power to construct an accepted truth about Benare, while her own experiences and perspectives are denied. The knowledge generated by the participants constructs her identity based on patriarchal assumptions, which exemplifies the discursive construction of truth, rather than its objective establishment. The process is also consistent with van Dijk's (1998) claim that discourse constructs collective beliefs by controlling representations of social groups. Thus, patriarchal ideology is reproduced through language that validates male authority and constructs female resistance as a social threat.

All these studies point to discourse as a key site for the production of gender identities, ideological power and institutional control. Existing research, however, is mostly confined to feminist theory, digital communication, workplace experiences, or the thematic representation of patriarchy. The micro-level linguistic strategies by which patriarchal power is constructed in literary discourse have received relatively little attention. Specifically, previous studies do not fully examine how lexical choices, labelling, evaluative vocabulary, questioning patterns, accusations and ideological representations construct Benare's identity as a deviant woman. In order to fill this gap, the present study combines Foucault's theory of discourse and power/knowledge (1977), van Dijk's (1998) Critical Discourse Analysis and Lazar's (2007) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how courtroom discourse constructs female marginalization and legitimizes patriarchal authority in *Silence! Court's in session*. This study shifts the focus from the thematic representation of oppression to its linguistic construction, thus contributing to feminist literary criticism by demonstrating how discourse functions as a powerful instrument of ideological control and gendered domination.

RESEARCH GAP

Earlier studies of *Silence! The Court is in Session* has largely dealt with the themes of patriarchy, female marginalization, gender oppression and social hypocrisy. These studies provide valuable insights into the victimization of Miss Benare and the patriarchal structures shaping her experiences but they devote little attention to the linguistic means of constructing and sustaining

patriarchal power. In particular, insufficient attention has been paid to how discourse strategies such as labelling, accusation, interruption, evaluative language, questioning patterns and ideological representation construct Benare as a socially deviant woman and legitimize her marginalization. To fill this gap, the present study moves the focus from the representation of oppression as theme to the representation of oppression as discourse. Using Foucault's (1977) theory of discourse and power/knowledge, van Dijk's (1998) Critical Discourse Analysis and Lazar's (2007) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, the study examines how courtroom discourse shapes dominant social truths, reproduces patriarchal authority, normalizes female identity and silences women's voices. Foregrounding the role of language in the production of gendered power relations, this research adds a linguistic perspective to the existing scholarship on Tendulkar's play and shows how discourse functions as a powerful instrument of patriarchal domination.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative interpretive research design based on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to investigate the language construction of patriarchal power, ideological control and female marginalization in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1978). This is a qualitative study as it seeks to investigate how discourse constructs gendered identities and social realities, rather than measuring linguistic patterns quantitatively. It argues that Miss Benare's oppression is discursively constructed through linguistic practices which define, classify and control female identity. The main source of data is Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court Is in Session* (1978). The play was chosen for its mock courtroom represents as a symbolic discursive realm in which language acts as a tool of accusation, surveillance, judgment, and moral regulation. The analysis considers on dialogues, interrogations, accusations, interruptions, labels, and evaluative statements directed at Miss Benare in order to investigate how patriarchal ideology is perpetuated through discourse.

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and power/knowledge, Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Michele Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). Foucault's (1977) notion of discourse provides the basis for exploring how institutions create knowledge and construct regimes of truth that delineate normality and deviance. His framework is used to examine how courtroom discourse objectifies Benare as an object of surveillance and moral judgement through disciplinary practices. The play's ideological structures are examined through Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (2008). Special focus is given to discursive strategies such as ideological polarization, positive self-representation, negative other-representation, lexicalization, presupposition, categorization, agency suppression and implication. These strategies are representative of how the male characters construct themselves as moral authorities and Benare as a socially deviant woman, and thus reproduce the patriarchal ideology through language. These views are supplemented by Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (2007) which examines the way in which discourse perpetuates unequal gender relations and silences women's voices. This framework allows for the analysis of gendered vocabulary, moral judgements, accusations and representations of femininity that regulate Benare's identity and reinforce patriarchal authority. The analysis is undertaken via a close reading of chosen dialogues and conversational exchanges. Linguistic features are examined at lexical, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic levels in order to examine how meaning and power are constructed. Lexical analysis focuses on words associated with morality, guilt, crime and respectability and semantic analysis explores the gendered nature of these concepts within patriarchal discourse. Syntactic analysis looks at patterns of questioning, modality,

commands and interruptions to show how authority is established linguistically. Pragmatic analysis looks at speech acts - accusations, questioning, silence and conversational control to show how unequal power relations limit Benare's agency. The analytical process is comprised of three phases: identification of significant dialogues concerning gender and power, classification of the dialogues according to the analytical frameworks of Foucault, van Dijk, and Lazar, and interpretation of the ways in which the discursive strategies construct patriarchal ideology. The study shows that the integration of these complementary approaches makes language in *Silence! The Court is in Session* does not only reflect patriarchal structures, but actively produces and legitimizes gender inequality. Thus, the research contributes to the existing scholarship by adding a linguistic perspective that emphasizes the discursive production of female oppression and patriarchal dominance.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The present research paper attempts to study discursive production of patriarchal ideology in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* through the linguistic construction of gender, morality and power. The analysis demonstrates how language is a tool for ideological control in the construction of Miss Benare as a socially deviant woman rather than oppression as the product of individual acts alone. The discussion draws on Foucault's (1978) theory of discourse and power/knowledge, van Dijk's (2008) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Lazar's (2007) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to analyze how lexical choices, semantic meanings, pronoun use, questioning patterns, modality, and other discursive strategies reiterate patriarchal authority. The mock courtroom serves as a symbolic institution in which discourse creates, legitimizes, and normalizes unequal gender relations. Through repeated linguistic practices, Benare is denied agency and transformed from an autonomous individual into an object of moral judgment.

Lexical and Semantic Construction of Female Deviance

Lexical choices in the mock trial construct Benare's identity through a discourse of guilt and moral failing. She is linked to criminality through a constant repetition of words like "accused," "crime," "evidence," "guilty," "judgment" and "punishment," despite the absence of any legal offence. These lexical patterns go beyond their literal meaning and form an ideological frame in which female independence is equated with social deviance. Discourse, as Foucault (1978) states, renders people socially acceptable categories of normal and abnormal. The courtroom, then, does not merely describe Benare's actions; it constructs her identity through repeated linguistic categorization. Semantic analysis also reveals that seemingly neutral expressions take on gendered meanings in patriarchal discourse. Ideas like 'character', 'morality' and 'respectability' are almost entirely defined in terms of female sexuality, obedience and social conformity. Thus, Benare's identity is judged on the basis of the patriarchal expectations rather than her professional competence or personal autonomy. This asymmetrical semantic construction is an example of van Dijk's (1998) notion of ideological representation, in which social meanings are defined by dominant groups, who maintain their authority and marginalize others. The male characters are defined by their intelligence, profession, and social status, whereas Benare is reduced to judgements about her private life. The ideological square by Van Dijk (1998) further exemplifies the ideological functioning of language by emphasizing positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. During the trial the participants on one hand create themselves as the defenders of justice, morality and social order and on the other hand depict Benare as irresponsible and

immoral. Benare's own decisions are constantly foregrounded, while male responsibility is backgrounded. This selective representation illustrates how discourse legitimizes patriarchal values through the control of the interpretation of events.

Tendulkar's own reflection reinforces this critique of linguistic categorization:

“Good-bad, right-wrong, once you tag things like that, you lose the ability to see the complete truth.... A murderer can also be a loving father. Don't tag things. Words are insufficient to describe the picture in totality. Try not to get trapped in the dictionary meaning of words” (Tendulkar, n.d.).

This observation undermines the very foundation of the courtroom, which relies on labels and on reducing complex human experiences into neat moral categories. The participants do not perceive Benare as a person but continue to brand her as immoral, unacceptable, and so on. This quotation thus demonstrates how language is used as a tool of ideological domination, by reducing reality and justifying social exclusion.

“Evidence” as a Discursive Strategy

The term 'evidence' is a powerful discursive strategy, which transforms Benare's private experiences into evidence of moral guilt. Traditionally, evidence is a fact used to establish truth, but in the courtroom, her relationships, pregnancy and private life become evidence against her character. This shift mirrors Foucault's (1978) notion of power/knowledge, which suggests that institutions generate truth by deciding which types of knowledge are admissible. Instead of uncovering objective truth, the mock trial constructs a patriarchal version of truth by selecting and interpreting Benare's experiences in accordance with dominant ideological assumptions. Van Dijk (1998) explains that presupposition enables embedding ideological assumptions in apparently neutral statements. The courtroom assumes that Benare's private life should be scrutinized in public and that the participation of men is mostly taken for granted. So, discourse creates an unequal relationship between the examiner and the woman being examined. Benare is a watched subject, not the subject of her own story. In Foucauldian terms, she is subjected to symbolic discipline, her identity regulated through language, not physical punishment. Hence, “evidence” is a linguistic mechanism through which patriarchal discourse legitimizes judgement and reinforces female marginalization.

Morality and the Construction of the Ideal Woman

In *Silence!* the discourse of morality is one of the primary mechanisms by which the ideology of patriarchy governs female identity. *Court In Session*. Morality is not a universal moral principle but a selective application to women, and a synonym for sexual purity, obedience and self-sacrifice. Thus, Benare's solitary lifestyle and her pregnancy outside of marriage are read as moral failings, rather than as individual choices. Foucault (1977) asserts that disciplinary power functions by setting up norms by which individuals are judged and controlled. Morality in the play is a norm that permits the courtroom participants to label Benare as deviant since she crosses patriarchal norms of femininity. In this process moral discourse produces social surveillance and legitimizes the regulation of women's behavior. Van Dijk (1998) further explains this unequal application of morality through the concept of ideological representation. The courtroom participants see themselves as defenders of justice and social order and portray Benare as the source of moral disorder. Their talk alludes to her failures, but not to the man who got her pregnant, demonstrating how dominant groups maintain their social position through controlling representations. Thus,

morality is an ideological construct that reinforces patriarchal authority rather than an objective standard of justice.

Semantic Field of Criminality

The repetition of legal vocabulary creates a semantic field of criminality which links Benare with guilt before any judgement is made. Lexical items such as “accused,” “crime,” “evidence,” “guilty,” “judgment,” and “punishment” repeatedly situate her in a discourse of legal and moral condemnation. She has done nothing criminal, but the continual reiteration of these words establishes a symbolic association between female independence and crime. Foucault (1978) argues that discourse produces categories within which the individual is understood and disciplined. The courtroom thus defines Benare as an abnormal subject whose identity challenges the patriarchal social order. The language of criminality goes beyond its legal meaning and becomes a disciplinary strategy warning against female autonomy. In a similar vein, van Dijk (1998) points out that dominant discourse reproduces inequality by highlighting the supposed shortcomings of marginalized individuals and downplaying those of dominant groups. In the mock trial, Benare’s actions are the sole focus of investigation, and male responsibility is almost entirely absent from the discourse. This selective representation reinforces the ideological assumption that women alone bear responsibility for moral transgression.

Pronouns and Agency: “We” versus “She”

The choice of pronouns is also a central factor in the construction of unequal power relations within the courtroom. “We” is a collective pronoun that carries with it a sense of authority, social legitimacy and institutional power whereas “she” isolates Benare as the object of judgement. This opposition creates a divide between those who are in control of defining truth and the woman that is being defined. As van Dijk (1998) explains, pronouns are used ideologically in order to construct in- and out-groups. The contrast between ‘we’ and ‘she’ is reiterated to reinforce collective authority and deny Benare equal participation in the production of meaning. The discourse effectively becomes, “We decide about her. This linguistic structure strips Benare of her authority over her own identity, leaving courtroom participants as the sole producers of social truth. Foucault’s (1977) theory of subject formation argues that individuals are made subjects by the discourses imposed upon them and not by self-definition. Thus, Benare is turned into an object of discussion, whose identity is constructed by others; she is no longer a speaking subject. Benare’s resistance to this imposed identity is evident in her declaration:

“I have a life of my own. I have a right to live it” (Tendulkar, 1978).

The repetition of the first-person pronoun ‘I’ reasserts agency and subverts patriarchal discourse. Benare attempts to move from the position of an object to be judged to that of an autonomous subject who can define herself by claiming ownership over her life. Yet, her opposition repeatedly fails in the face of the dominant discourse, revealing the constricting power of patriarchal language and the privileging of collective authority over individual experience.

Silence as a Command: Linguistic Control and Female Suppression

The title *Silence! The Court is in Session* itself captures the relationship between language and power. The word “Silence!” functions as an imperative rather than a mere noun, transforming silence into an act of institutional authority. This shift in language is a reflection of the power structure of the mock courtroom, where some voices are legitimized to speak and others are systematically delegitimized. Benare is permitted to answer, but the courtroom itself mediates her

speech, denying her the power of its interpretation. According to Foucault (1977), power is exercised not only through refusal to speak but also through control over the conditions under which speech is accepted as truth. Benare's voice is not silenced physically, but rather discursively invalidated. Her testimony is constantly interrupted, questioned and reinterpreted until it loses its legitimacy. Silence thus becomes a kind of symbolic violence through which patriarchal discourse silences female agency while appearing to be just. Lazar (2007) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis further argues that institutional discourse which privileges male voices and marginalizes women's perspectives reproduces unequal gender relations. This process is exemplified by the courtroom in which male participants determine the issues to be discussed, interpret evidence and establish standards of morality while Benare is denied equal discursive authority. Thus, silence is a product of ideological power, not the absence of speech.

Polarization and the Construction of "Us" and "Them"

Polarization is a dominant ideological strategy in the play. As van Dijk (2008) states, it is the differentiation between positive self-portrayal and negative other-portrayal. The participants in the mock trial all construct themselves as rational, moral, and socially responsible, and construct Benare as immoral, irresponsible, and socially dangerous. This binary opposition produces an ideological hierarchy in which the authority of the father seems natural and legitimate and the independence of the female is perceived as a threat to the social order. In the courtroom talk, the focus is always on Benare's own decisions, and the guy whose part of her situation gets off easy. This selective representation is an illustration of van Dijk's (1998) argument that dominant groups keep their power by controlling the distribution of praise and blame. The discourse does not challenge the unequal moral standards imposed on women but rather names Benare as the sole source of social disorder. Foucault's (1977) idea of disciplinary power also shows how institutions preserve power by creating categories of the normal and the deviant. It is her challenge to patriarchal definitions of respectable womanhood, rather than her actions, that is judged in Benare. Tendulkar's reflection reinforces this critique of ideological categorization:

"Good-bad, right-wrong, once you tag things like that, you lose the ability to see the complete truth.... A murderer can also be a loving father. Don't tag things. Words are insufficient to describe the picture in totality. Try not to get trapped in the dictionary meaning of words" (Tendulkar, n.d.).

This quote shows how bad it is to put people into strict moral groups. It's different from Tendulkar's view, which sees people as human beings. In the courtroom, they keep calling Benare a bad woman, and they don't look at how complicated her life is. So, the analysis shows that men having power over women depends on how we use language to put women into categories, which turns them into symbols of what's wrong with society instead of seeing them as complex people with their own stories.

Metaphor and Symbolic Representation

Metaphor is at the heart of the construction of ideological meanings in the play. The courtroom is not merely a dramatic space but a symbolic institution that authorizes surveillance, judgement, and punishment. The metaphor of the court gives the participants the right to question and define Benare's identity, even though they are actors in a mock trial. Language generates a social reality in this symbolic transubstantiation where patriarchal judgements seem to be objective and out of the question.

Tendulkar's observation,

“There are times when one's life appears to be a stage. People come; people go. They come in order to go, and go with no intent of return. When they return, they return as one's past—a past that would make you feel that the present is false” (Tendulkar, n.d.) highlights the relationship between performance and identity. This is demonstrated in the courtroom, which has fixed social roles: the participants become judges, prosecutors, and moral authorities, while Benare is cast as the accused woman. Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity also suggests that these roles are socially constructed through repeated performances rather than natural identities. In like manner Foucault (1978) asserts that subjects are constituted through discourse. Benare is not deviant in herself, but her identity is constituted by patriarchal language which constantly constructs her as the guilty woman. The metaphor of the court, finally, exposes that social reality is not revealed but discursively constructed through institutional language and ideological performance.

CONCLUSION

This research paper demonstrates patriarchal domination in *Silence! The Court is in Session* is produced and sustained through discourse rather than through overt coercion alone. By integrating Foucault's (1978) theory of discourse and power/knowledge, van Dijk's (2008) Critical Discourse Analysis, and Lazar's (2007) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, the analysis reveals how language functions as a powerful mechanism for constructing gendered identities, legitimizing male authority, and marginalizing women. The mock courtroom operates as a symbolic institution in which discourse produces social truths about femininity, morality, and respectability, transforming Miss Benare from an autonomous individual into an object of surveillance, judgment, and ideological control. The findings demonstrate that linguistic strategies including lexical choices, semantic constructions, pronoun usage, polarization, metaphor, modality, accusation, and agency suppression collectively construct Benare as a socially deviant woman while reinforcing patriarchal norms. Rather than objectively evaluating her actions, the courtroom discourse selectively interprets her experiences to justify moral condemnation and exclude her perspective. Benare's assertion, **“I have a life of my own. I have a right to live it”** (Tendulkar, 1978) represents a moment of resistance against this discursive oppression; however, her voice is ultimately overshadowed by the dominant patriarchal narrative. This study contributes to feminist literary criticism by shifting attention from the thematic representation of female oppression to its linguistic construction. It establishes that language in Tendulkar's play is not merely a medium of communication but a site where power, ideology, and gender inequality are produced and maintained. Consequently, the study underscores the importance of feminist discourse analysis in revealing how patriarchal structures are embedded within language and continue to shape social perceptions of women.

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