

## RESISTANCE AND TENDULKAR'S '*SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSIONS*' : A POSTCOLONIAL READING

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### I

My generation was the first to come of age after India became independent of British Rule. It therefore had to face a situation in which tensions implicit until then had come out in the open and demanded to be resolved without apologia or self-justification; tensions between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of Western modes of thought and our own traditions, and finally between the various visions of the future that opened up once the common cause of political freedom was achieved. This is the historical context that gave rise to my plays and those of my contemporaries.

Girish Karnad (1994:1)

Perhaps there is none to deny the fact that modern Indian literary culture carries within itself seeds of undeniable hybridity. Her own culture, varied and enriched in the historical sojourn of last three thousand years, suffered a terrible jolt and derailment as the British captured India and introduced a colonial rule, hitherto unknown to her. This new culture, germinating and growing fast in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, the three ports of commerce and economic interest, not only made an iron division between urban and rural ways of life, but through the sparks of a belated renaissance touched and roused the sleeping middle class that, as if mesmerized, ran after English Education and learnt to despise everything of native tradition. As far as theatre is concerned, the bifurcation was made in a straight and simple way. Touring productions, patronized by the Govt. and intended to entertain the British officials only, were made open to Indians also, and a huge number of English plays were selected to replace the native ones in the syllabus of Indian universities. Soon western plays, designed not only to impress new artistic activity but to impose on Indians a way of understanding that confirms colonial inferiority and subjugation in the guise of enlightenment and exposure, (1) came to be popular for the rising, ticket-buying middle class, that rapidly dissociated itself from all classical, ritual and folk performances and moved forward in search of modernity. Shanta Gokhale, in *Playwright at the Centre, Marathi Drama from 1843 to the Present*, counts the features of this modernity in relation to *Andhalyanchi Shala*, (School for the blind) staged on 1st July, 1933 at the first modern Marathi play: