CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

There is always an inherent motive in literature which a writer seeks to obtain by employing a complex of linguistic and literary features. Art is inevitable part of human experience; it is knowledge coupled with emotions. Human interest in art has always been eternal and this eternity has made man civilized and cultured. Art, therefore, is concerned with expression and man expresses himself through the form of art. In literary criticism art is divided into two types. Fine Arts and other than Fine Arts. The function of fine arts is to afford pleasure while other forms of art satisfy human needs. Architecture, sculpture, music and poetry are fine arts. Drama is included in fine arts. Other literary forms find expression in statement, however, drama finds expression in acting.

Literature, according to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, is piece of writing that is valued as work of art, especially novels, plays and poems (in contrast to technical books, and newspapers, magazines, etc. (751). Among other genres of literature, drama is the liveliest genre which includes all plays or anything meant to be performed. They are written with the intention of being performed for the audience as they present a realistic live representation of the individual and of the society in a manner which is quite different from fiction and poetry. It is a unique variety which portrays emotions to be enacted very well on the stage. Vijay Tendulkar, a renowned Marathi dramatist, chose drama to expose the follies and breakdowns of society accurately by involving self and simultaneously distancing himself from it. According to M.H. Abrams, drama is:

The form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue. (69)
Compared to other literary forms, drama is very close to human life and it is said “Drama makes the spectators' hearts dance”. Drama is said to be the mirror of the world because on its small scale the full context of human life is revealed. It is a process that originates in the writer's mind and completes itself when it touches the heart of the spectators. It is a world of make-believe and its roots are in its performance. It has always remained a unique means to spread morality and to entertain. Long before movies came into being, Indian theatre had been a major source of spreading moral values and entertainment. The remarkable feature is that - in spite of the emergence of the Indian cinema, the Indian theatre has not lost its significance. The Indian cinema with all its advanced techniques, sophisticated cameras and freedom of variety has remained unsuccessful in surpassing the Indian Theatre. No doubt an actor who works in a cinema gets more money than a player of the stage but the player of the stage gets more appreciation than the actor on the screen. The camera of a movie allows the compensation of a re-take to the actor whereas for the artist of a theatre no re-take is possible. The work, moreover, demands more sincerity and higher efficiency which finally brings greater appreciation to the actor.

There are various types of dramas like chronical plays, comedy of humours, comedy of manners, drama of sensibility, epic theatre, folk drama, mime, heroic drama, masque, melodrama, miracle plays, morality plays and interludes, pantomime, dumb show, pastoral problem play, satire, sentimental comedy, tragedy, tragic comedy etc. In drama, all the incidents occur spectacularly before the audiences through verbal and non-verbal expressions. A drama is basically a piece of writing in which a story is unfolded before audience through its performance by actors in a theatre. W.H. Hudson says:

The drama is designed for representation by actors who impersonate the characters of its story and among whom the narrative and the dialogue are distributed. Plot, characters,
dialogues, an atmosphere and a certain view of life, are the chief elements of drama. (152)

Drama, according to Hudson, delights as well as instructs mankind; it portrays all that is happening around us; it gives an opportunity to view the happenings, expressions of actors and mindfully listen to their dialogues. So, drama has an edge over the other genres like novel or poetry by its visual and oral dimensions. It is a vehicle of spreading awareness among people through entertainment. M.K. Naik aptly observes:

Drama is a composite art in which the written word of the playwright attains complete artistic realization only when it becomes the spoken word of the actor on the stage, and through that medium reacts on the mind of the audience. A play, in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience that needs a real theatre and a live audience. (180-181)

In the realm of literary creations, the tradition of drama has been acknowledged as the oldest and the most authentic expression of human sensibility. Its structure is compact and it reveals the possibilities of a straightway communication between audience’s sensibility and that of theatre artists. Through drama, socio-ethical and cultural changes have been introduced throughout the ages. In India, it originated from the classical Sanskrit drama which had a divine origin. All its rules were directives of divine and permitted little spaces for the auto dramatist. The contribution of Sanskrit drama and the ancient classical theatre had been enormous and it laid the foundation of theatre in Asia. Latterly, other forms of traditional theatre also made use of Sanskrit theatrical tradition. It is said, according to traditional legend, drama was originated as a tribute to divine deities. Bharatmuni in *Natyashastra* says when people were addicted to mere sensual pleasures, god Indra with other gods approached
Brahma and implored him to create something which would be visible plus audible, so as to divert the people and also besought to make it open for all kinds of people. Lord Brahma after meditating over four books of hymns made drama ‘natya’ which was called as ‘fifth veda’. He took recitation from Rigveda, songs from Samveda, acting from Yajurveda and aesthetics from Athurveda for the design of natya. So, all the four Vedas laid foundation of the emergence of drama collectively. It was also called Naatyashyam, Pancham Vedam. The aim behind it was to promote all the four purusharathas (Dharma, Arth, Kam, Moksha) and to sublimate the baser instincts of human nature. In the broader sense, drama, includes the elements of social and individual concerns and at the same time elements related to art and aesthetics also prevaricate other issues of human concern. So, it can be discerned that drama ubiquitously has a comprehensive range. K.R.S. Iyengar concedes its comprehensiveness:

Indian drama was expected to comprehend whole arc of life, ranging from the material to the spiritual, the phenomenal to transcendent and provide at once relaxation and entertainment, instruction and illumination. (4)

Entertainment along with exceptional peace and serenity was greatly emphasized in Sanskrit drama. It made its audience aware of the higher reality existing behind the phenomenal appearance of truth. There was no direct representation of reality. So, Vedic literature contains the seeds of origin of drama. Indian drama had established its own well developed dramatic theory and dramaturgy before the emergence of Greek drama. It has originated even before the emergence of Greek drama with its tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus. Bharatmuni in Natyashastra presents the stagecraft comprehensively including plot construction, music, stage-setting principles, dialogue and acting. And in ancient classical notion, there was a theory of ‘rasa’ which was greatly emphasized. These
‘rasa’ are nine and corresponding to the primary emotions of man. Dr. Beena Aggarwal clarifies:

The dramatic performances were organized to bring emotional excitement and this emotional involvement of audience helps to restore the ethical appeal of drama. In this regard the aim of drama was entertainment, instruction and illumination. Indian dramatic tradition adheres to the highest principles of aesthetics but simultaneously it also represents rich national and cultural heritage of India. (DWVT 2-3)

Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidasa, Harsha and Bhavabhuti with their high moral standards and excellent technical innovations are regarded as great exponents in Indian theatrical tradition. This high seriousness of classical drama was lost with the passage of time but its sparks from cinders continued to appear in regional and folk theatres. Now its purpose is to entertain people and hence it led to the establishment of regional theatres in India. The regional dramas are ‘jatras’ of Bengal, ‘folk plays’ of Tamil Nadu, ‘Yakshaganas’ of Karnataka, ‘Kathakali’ of Kerala, ‘Bhavi’ of Gujrat, ‘Ramlila’ of North India and ‘Tamasha’ of Maharashtra. These variegated regional drama forms are still ubiquitous in India.

With the presence of British colonisers in India, the tradition of Indian English drama got its cradling with the translation of ancient Sanskrit plays into English. Writers also tried to transcript the European model to appease the interests of elitists in metro-cities. But drama failed to get appropriate growth, appreciation and popularity. The limitation of language was a major impediment in the progress of theatrical activities. But when British people again migrated by the end of nineteenth century, dramatists started exposing various social problems of contemporary India. There was mingling of Western models and the native soul with native soil in the growth of Indian theatre. The religious spirit has been the governing
motif in Indian drama. The place of Bengali Theatre is extremely significant in the context of Indian English drama as one can find the true synthesis of old and new forms.

The Indian English drama assumed the form of independent flowing stream in the beginning the twentieth century, Beena Aggarwal categorises it into three parts:

1. Pre-Independence drama that includes the dramatic creations of Rabindernath Tagore, Sir Audobindo and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya.
2. Post-independence drama that represents the dramatic achievements of G.V. Desai, Pratap Sharma, Gurucharan Das, Lakhan Deb, and Pritish Nandy.
3. Contemporary Indian English drama that includes the radical social drama of Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh and Mahesh Dattani. (7)

The trio of Aurobindo, Tagore and Chattopadhyaya, inspite of their preoccupation with philosophy set a direction for the flourish of Indian drama based on Indian themes and Indian models. In the post-independence era, a drastic change occurred in the pattern of Indian English drama; theatrical activities gained a new force with the contribution of dramatists of the period. But the native Indians were unable to appreciate the spirit and scope of English drama. There was dominance of regional theatre but gradually the pattern started changing. The Indian English drama emerged as a powerful voice which started to record the changing dynamics of social systems, power oppressions, personal relationships, collapse of values and also the psychological derangement of new generation. New pioneers of theatre in India were deviating from the philosophical bending of their predecessors towards a new direction. And this echoed the real voice of India. They started experimenting in theatrical
as well as in thematic patterns and techniques. The dramatists of the contemporary period made experiments with world drama by reinvestigating history, legend, myth and folklore. Dramatists like Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani provided a new identity to Indian drama. They depict the socio-psychological spectrum of the predicament of man in shifting social conditions and flippant moral values. In this regard, Dhyaneswar Nadkarni opines:

Vijay Tendulkar leads the vanguard of the avant-garde theatre that developed a movement separate from the main stream. Tendulkar and his colleagues were dissatisfied with the decadent professional theatre that characterized the thirties and forties. They wanted to give theatre a new form and therefore experimented with all aspects of it including content, acting, decor and audience communication. (74)

Girish Karnad, the most important dramatist of contemporary Indian stage having capacity of an actor, director, writer and producer represented India in foreign lands as an emissary of art and culture. Though he is a Kannada writer yet he has translated his plays into English so as to make it reach a larger audience. Born on 19th May, 1938 Karnad was influenced by the touring Natak companies and more by Yakshagana. His popular plays are *Yayati, Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Nagamandala, Tale-Dande* etc. He reinvented history, myths and old-legends, for his plots imbued with intricate symbolism. With his plays, he tried to locate them in current socio-political scenario. For example, his play *Yayati* reinterprets the myth from *The Mahabharata* in modern terms. Similarly *Tughlaq* is the mingling of facts and fiction, wherein he discovers the vital relationship between literature and contemporary society. His usage of myth gives a new look of present age to the past happenings. He entered the world of cinema
alternately working as an actor, director, script-writer adding feathers to his cap. He, now, at the age of seventy during an interview in a magazine “India Today” remarked:

I’ve had a good life. I have managed to do all I could wish for-even be a government servant! Now I feel whatever time I have left should be spent doing what I like best-writing plays (Nov. 24, 2013).

Karnad’s works have successfully bound the traditional forms of Indian theatre with the modern. His plays prevaricate and eschew the tinge of the modernity of tradition.

Badal Sircar is a great Bengali playwright and is one of the strong pillars of contemporary Indian drama. His plays delve deep into the problems of middle class-society; he picks up contemporary situations to explore the existential attitude to modern life. He is popularly known as ‘barefoot playwright’. Badal Sircar stands in the forefront of new theatrical movement in India. A term ‘Third Theatre’ comes to his credit because he created a genuine theatre which is supported, created and performed by the people. Sircar initially penned some comedies, however, he came to limelight in 1965 with his celebrated Evam Indrajit. His training as a civil engineer and professional careerist as an urban planner got mixed with his inner life as a dramatist and its outward expression in his role as a theatre director-actor. He prefers doing theatre to writing.

Similarly, the influence of Mohan Rakesh on Indian English drama can not be ignored. He wrote in Hindi and his plays have been translated into English and other regional languages. His first major play Ashadh Ka Ek Din was published in 1958. Lehron Ka Rajhansa, Adhe Adhure etc. are also some of his well known plays. He mainly portrays the crises of a man who is caught up in the vortex of uncongenial surroundings and adumbrates a continuous danger to human relations. In his play Ashadh Ka
*Ek Din*, he portrays how sycophancy is dangerous. In another play, *Adhe Adhure*, he reflects the problems of clash of ego between husband and wife, disintegration of relations in family, and everyone’s individual interest is more important for them instead of the commitments of the family. Mohan Rakesh made extensive experiments in theatrical dynamics.

When Sahitya Akademi was founded in 1954, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan defined its objective for the unity and promotion of Indian literature notwithstanding India’s geographical, social, political and linguistic diversities. His slogan was that Indian literature is composite, though written in many languages. And in this very context, the plays of Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar and Vijay Tendulkar, though all of them writing in different regional languages, assume spectacular significance. Among all these writers, Vijay Tendulkar was a leading Indian playwright, movie and television script-writer, literary essayist, political journalist and social commentator, primarily in Marathi. He is famous for his plays like *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* (1967), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972) and *Sakharam Binder* (1972). His plays depict predominantly the real-life incidents or social upheavals and throw a clear light on the harsh realities of life. He also guided the students studying “Playwright writing” in US Universities. He had been a highly influential dramatist and theatre personality in the state of Maharashtra and has been conferred with many honours and awards. He is a towering Indian dramatist and all his plays are sharply focused and illuminating. V.B. Deshpande in V.M Madge’s *Anthology* rightly states:

> Since the Independence - since 1950, to be precise - the name of Vijay Tendulkar has been in the forefront of the Marathi drama and stage. His personality both as man and writer is multifaceted. It has often been puzzling and curious with a big question mark on it. In the last 55 years he has written stories, novels, one-act plays, plays for children as well as for
adults. Similarly he has done script-writing and newspaper columns as well. And in all these fields he has created an image of his own. Thus he is a creative writer with a fine sensibility and at the same time a contemplative and controversial dramatist. He has made a mark in the field of journalism also. Because of his highly individual viewpoint and vision of life and because of his personal style of writing he has made a powerful impression in the field of literature and drama, and has given the post-independence Marathi drama a new idiom. By doing this he has put Marathi drama on the national and international map. (18)

The similar indebtedness is also expressed by Arundhati Banerjee, “Vijay Tendulkar has been in the vanguard of not just Marathi but Indian theatre for almost forty years. He not only pioneered the experimental theatre movement in Marathi but also guided it” (FP vii). Dr. Shreeram Lagoo gave him title “A dramatist of the stage plays”. Tendulkar has a proper knowledge of ‘Rangtantra’ and his plays are ‘performance plays’ with intellectual subjects. His writing is always thrilling, contains shock elements, and is very powerful.

It is, therefore, important to peruse the state of the Marathi theatre before the appearance of Vijay Tendulkar in order to get a proper understanding of his art. The strong playwriting tradition in Maharashtra has been alive now for over 150 years. The various folk forms of theatre such as Lalit, Tamasha, Keertan, Dashavatar and Bharud originated from different regions of Maharashtra. All of them are accompanied by music, dance, and mimic action. There is simplicity in language, costumes and staging. The germs of Marathi drama lay in these folk forms which consequently influenced the evolution of Marathi drama. Shahajiraje Bhonsale, the King of Tanjavar, had written plays in Marathi towards the end of the 17th century. Vishnudas Bhave is generally venerated as the father
of Marathi drama. His play *Sita Swayamvar* (Sita’s Selection of Bridegroom) staged on 5th November 1843, is regarded as the first Marathi play.

After the successful presentation of *Sita Swayamvar*, the King of Sangli encouraged Bhave to compose more plays. Bhave formed a company and gave his dramatic presentations in different parts of Maharashtra in the next ten years. His innovations consisted in having the play’s characters act in a manner closer to that found in everyday encounters between people and the inclusion of some western stage production techniques, such as changeable scenery. His plays gave prominence to songs and music. They were one-man shows with the Sutradhar or the narrator dominating most of the action.

The top-ranking political leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak had been taking keen interest in the theatre. That’s why, the Marathi theatre became directly involved in the movements for social reform and political independence. With the passage of a decade or so the audience started growing weary of the Bhave style of drama. The introduction of English education in India by the British administration also contributed to the decline of early mythological drama. The young men studying in the colleges were introduced to western literature and Shakespearean drama. They also studied the Sanskrit plays of Kalidasa, Sudraka, Bhasa, Bhavabhuti etc. They yearned for a new kind of Marathi drama and began translating Sanskrit and Shakespearean plays into Marathi. Thus the newly awakened sensibility took the form of translations and adaptations from Sanskrit and English drama.

The scholarly men produced adaptations of the plays of Shakespeare one after another which laid the foundations of the ‘prose’ school of Marathi drama. After Vishnudas Bhave, the next important actor-playwright in the Marathi theatre is Balwant Pandurang alias Annasaheb Kirloskar. He began his career with mythological Bhave-type plays. He gave the Marathi theatre a new turn by the incorporation of classical ragas
for the singing of all parts in his later plays adapted from Sanskrit classics such as *Shakuntalam* and *Mrichakatikam*. After composing half a dozen plays for the drama company which he had joined at the age of twenty, Kirloskar formed his own company, the ‘Kirloskar Natak Mandali’ in 1880. His adaptation of the Sanskrit classic *Abhijnanshakuntala* by Kalidas was the finest production of the company. Kirloskar discarded Bhave’s convention of having the Sutradhar (narrator) providing all of the singing. In his plays, the characters were made to express their thoughts and feelings through their own singing. In the hands of Bhave’s imitators, the opening scene with the Sutradhar had merely become a convention. Kirloskar made the dialogue between the Sutradhar and the Nati (an actress) a dramatic device of great evocative power. He also gave up the practice of having a Vidushak (clown) in the play.

The tradition of the Sangeetnatak (verse play) started by Kirloskar was continued by able playwrights like G.B. Deval, S.K. Kolhatkar, R.G. Gadkari and K.P. Khadilkar. Uptil now the Marathi theatre had consisted of mythological plays, verse plays and adaptations from Sanskrit and Western plays. Deval’s *Sharada* is an attempt to deal with an actual social problem in a realistic manner. Thus Deval was a forerunner to the modern Marathi playwrights like Tendulkar, Alekar and Elkunchwar who displayed social realism in their works. In his plays, Kolhatkar revolted against all the characteristic elements of the Kirloskar-type verse play. Kirloskar’s plays bear the influence of the Sanskrit classic plays whereas those of Kolhatkar show the influence of western plays.

Another important playwright of the early twentieth century is Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar. A disciple of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Khadilkar was an important leader of the nationalist movement. Khadilkar’s *Keechakwadh* (The Slaying of Keechak) is considered to be one of the most significant political plays in Marathi. However, it was banned by the British administration. It is a good example of the way the dramatists invented subtle stratagems to present their point of view as plays
displaying national self-awareness were being banned by the English administration. The play dealt with an episode taken from the epic ‘The Mahabharata’ in which Bhima, one of the Pandavas, slays Keechak, an evil-minded warrior, for trying to molest Draupadi. Keechak symbolised British rule as represented by the hated Lord Curzon. In his play _Vidyaharan_ (Theft of Knowledge), Khadilkar used a mythological episode to attack the increasing addiction to liquor in society, an evil effect of the influence of western culture.

The Maharashtra Natak Mandali was founded in Pune in 1905. The company introduced many changes in the stage design and also used modern make-up for the first time on Marathi stage. Ram Ganesh Gadkari, a disciple of S.K. Kolhatkar, also continued the tradition of Marathi verse plays. He wrote mostly social dramas which were highly appreciated by the public. The Marathi theatre took recourse to realism under the influence of Ibsen in the post-World War I period. Bhargavaram Vitthal alias Mama Warerkar was one of the pioneers in bringing the realistic social drama on the Marathi stage. He depicted the problems and sufferings of the lower-middle class people on the Marathi stage for the first time. This shows his desire to use drama as a vehicle of social reform.

The golden age of the Marathi Sangeetnatak had come to an end by 1920. The period unto 1945 is comparatively barren as far as the Marathi drama is concerned. The cultural and political environment in Maharashtra began declining after World War I. The middle class who had led the cultural and political scene so far felt lonely and sad. Most of the writers belonged to this class and so the reaction of this sorry state of affairs is seen in their writings. The glorious tradition of the verse play which had begun with Kirloskar’s _Shakuntala_ had lost its vigour completely. The theatre companies were facing financial problems. The arrival of the talking cinema also contributed to the theatre’s decline. Most of the dramatic output in this period is mediocre with the exception of the plays
of P.K. Atre and M.G. Rangnekar who managed to keep the Marathi drama alive.

Theatrical company Natyamanvantar, which was formed with the specific purpose of bringing modern drama to the Marathi stage, did not get financial success and the company was closed down within three years of its formation. The fate of other drama companies in Maharashtra was similar to that of the Natyamanvantar. Almost all the major companies, including Kirloskar Company, Bal Gandharva Company and Lalit-Kaladarsha closed down between 1934 and 1936. The rapidly increasing popularity of the cinema and the mediocrity of the Marathi plays of the period chiefly contributed to this calamity on the Marathi drama. The first few years of the fourth decade of the twentieth century can be termed as the worst time in the history of Marathi theatre. After the release of Ayodhyecha Raja Harishchandra (Harishchandra, The King of Ayodhya) in 1931 by Prabhat Films, the popularity of the cinema rose rapidly. The Marathi theatre had not been able to retain its earlier vigour. Many actors and technicians deserted the theatre and turned towards the new medium. Actually other regional language theatres in the country such as Telgu, Tamil and Kannada theatres also faced the same fate. The Marathi drama was too deep-rooted, however, to be completely destroyed. Along with Varerkar, Atre and Rangnekar’s plays perpetuated the tradition of the Marathi drama even during this period.

Another important contributor to the Marathi stage during the difficult years between the advent of cinema and the end of World War II is Motiram Gajanan Rangnekar. He realised that the Marathi plays needed to be short, light and entertaining in order to survive the onslaught of cinema. He tried to give the audience what they were looking for. Plots dealing with domestic problems, creation of a pleasant atmosphere, verbal wit and clever imagination are the characteristics of his plays.

The modern era in the Marathi theatre may be said to have begun after the end of World War II in 1945. In the post-war period, the life in the
western countries had become alarmingly insecure. The uncontrollable
greed and ambition of the political tycoons combined with the invention of
deadly nuclear weapons had shaken the very foundation of human
existence. Despair and a sense of alienation raised the signals of warning
humanity. The faith in God and religion and traditional values had become
meaningless terms. It was natural that this state of chaos was reflected in
the western drama and literature. Even the Marathi theatre felt the impact
of these conditions. The new schools like existentialism, the theatre of the
absurd, the theatre of cruelty and the Brechtian theatre etc. also influenced
the Marathi drama. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, launched an
inter-collegiate one-act drama competition in 1955. The Maharashtra State
drama competition also began around the same time. These competitions
provided afflatus to the budding playwrights. The theatre audience showed
a lot of interest in the festivals of plays organised by the sponsors of these
competitions. The Progressive Dramatic Association (PDA) in Pune and
Rangayan in Mumbai were established in the sixties. Prof. Bhalba Kelkar
and Vijaya Mehata led these groups respectively. These theatre groups
dared stage play which were different from the mainstream trends. The
Awishkar theatre group was founded by Arvind and Sulbha Deshpande. It
has produced over 150 plays in the last forty-three years, most of them
being experimental plays. It has provided a valuable platform for numerous
directors, technicians as well as budding artists. It has been conducting
various workshops for amateur artists. It was the advent of cinema that had
initiated the decline of Marathi theatre in the thirties. The sixties witnessed
the decline of Marathi cinema. The middle class people reverted back to
the theatre. The new audience expected a treatment of its life and problems
in the plays. The prominent playwrights from 1955 to 1985 displayed an
awareness of contemporary reality and dealt with the problems of human
relationships in a fast-changing society. After getting independence in
1947, modernity and industrialisation began sweeping rapidly through the
country. A new nation was being built. A new society with new
sensibilities was coming into being. It was against this background that
Vijay Tendulkar’s play *Shrimant* (The Rich) appeared in 1956. Unfazed by
the initial failures, he continued to write plays with an amazing regularity
for almost four decades and enriched the Marathi theatre considerably with
his innovations in the form as well as the content of his plays.

One can see that Marathi drama has had an impressive and
continuous tradition since its beginning in 1843 with Vishnudas Bhave’s
plays. Owing to the presence of professional stage and encouraging box-
office prospects, the playwriting tradition has flourished in Maharashtra.
The Marathi theatre took great strides from 1955 onwards because of the
efforts of Vijay Tendulkar and his contemporaries such as Vasant
Kanetkar, P.L. Deshpande, C.T. Khanolkar, V.V. Shirwadkar, Ratnakar
Matkari, Achyut Vaze, G.P. Deshpande, Satish Alekar and Mahesh
Elkunchwar who continued the tradition of entertainment-cum edification
of their predecessors. The changing conditions in the social, political and
cultural spheres of Maharashtra in the post-independence times are
adequately mirrored in the works of these dramatists. Their plays are
characterised by realism in theme, structure, dialogue and setting. Their
main concern is the presentation of contemporary life. Thus the Marathi
drama has succeeded in regaining the glory which it had lost in the period
between the two great wars. Tendulkar is one of the major contributors
towards the resurgence and spectacular success of Marathi drama in the
second half of the twentieth century.

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the best known playwrights in modern
Indian theatre. He wrote his first story when he was just six years young.
He directed and acted in his first play when he was eleven. He had made a
mark in the field of journalism also. This most prolific writer has to his
credit thirty full-length plays, seven collections of one-act plays, six
collections of children’s plays, four collection of short stories, three
collections of essays, seventeen film scripts and two novels.
Chandrashekhar Barve hails the unparalleled contribution of Tendulkar to Marathi theatre:

We can say with certainty that Tendulkar has guided Marathi drama that seemed to have lost its proper track, and has kept leading it for over two decades. His place and importance in this respect shall remain unique in the history of Marathi drama. There may be controversies regarding his greatness but his achievements are beyond question. (25)

He further substantiates, “His extra-dramatic writing also reveals his pure taste for drama which tries to capture the different tensions and through them finds ‘dramatics’ accurately” (25). Though his plays have been constricted by the socio-political conditions of India, yet his florilegium gets emulated to the universal level.

His one-act plays are more experimental than his full-length plays. Most of them have been translated and produced in major Indian languages and some of them into English. Ghashiram Kotwal, Gidhade, Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe, Sakharam Binder, Kamala, Kanyadaan, Encounter, A Friend's Story are some of his famous plays. He has been regarded as playwright of the millennium. Critics bring to our notice the prismatic quality of his writings and his plays being ahead of their times and at the same time, they are, therefore, timeless. He delineates the accurate and sensitive picture of the social issues of the time. Thematically, his plays have ranged from the alienation of the modern individual to contemporary politics, from social-individual tensions to the complexities of human character and from exploration of man-woman relationship to reinterpretation of historical episodes. Then gender relation, sexual norms, institution of marriage and issues of conventional morality are also some of the prominent themes of his plays. He explores sharply the tragedy of an individual victimized by the societal obstructions. His primary penchant is
to expose the follies of the society and to make it a better place to live. He 
emphasizes the importance of making better families, better homes and 

hence the better societies.

Society according to sociologists is a group of people with common 
territory, interaction and culture. There is a web of social relationships. The 
world we live in and live for, revolve round human relationships. 
Interpersonal relationships determine human behaviour and attitudes 
towards society. A truthful artistic creation, in fact, deals with a human 
being and his relationship with society. The writer, through these inter-
personal relationships, depicts the trajectory of human behavior and 
attitude towards society. A genuine effort on the part of the writer is to 
present the social reality of the age and in this way art becomes a 
sociological entity.

With the advent and increase of commercialization, old traditions 
and rituals have lost their sheen. A sense of insecurity and a loss of self 
have gripped every individual in the contemporary society. Today society 
in divided on the basis of caste, class, color, religion, sex etc. These 
divisions distort the unity between mind and body. And this fragmented 

mind is a gift of the so-called modern civilized society. Tendulkar’s literary 
oeuvre verges on these socio-political issues. He penetrates into the stark 
realities of life in the present day milieu without any kind of sugar-coating 
over it. And for this reason he categorically scathes orthodox views of 
society. He can be seen as iconoclast who intends to bring a silent but 
gradual change in people’s attitude towards life and its problems. His 
works mirror both the positive and negative sides of the society. There is a 
kind of force for the audience to see the ugliness that pervades the society.
The present study is an effort to analyse and interpret Tendulkar’s critique 
of society as reflected in his eight plays, viz. Silence! The Court is in 
Session (1967); The Vulture (1970); Encounter in Umbagland (1969); 
Sakharam Binder (1972); Ghasiram Kotwal (1972); A Friend’s Story 
Now the question arises why this critique of society is needed. We all live in a society and without which one can not survive. Everything that happens to individual effects society in totality and vice-versa. So in a sense, it's strange how many of us can live together, work together and communicate with one another, when each of us believes that we are unique individual selves. It is in this context that Vijay Tendulkar’s writings dwell on the deep penetration of human relationships in the contemporary society.

The works of Tendulkar have attained a wide acclaim throughout the world. His protagonists are compared with John Osborne’s ‘angry young men’. His play Ghashiram Kotwal had earned him unique popularity internationally. Tendulkar’s works are often compared with many dramatists of various countries like Emile Zola, John Osborne, Chekhov, Tagore, Darwin, Harold Pinter, Edward Albee, etc.

Our present day society is replete with plethora of problems and Tendulkar deems it his responsibility to use theatre as a mirror to society. Tendulkar’s plays underline that he is a dramatist with desire to strive tirelessly for a perfect society where there is no barrier of caste, class, sex etc. He dreams for egalitarianism - freedom, equality and social justice for all. He uses theatre not for mere entertainment and gratification rather he tries to make his audience introspective and encourage them to think over their day-to-day life's insidious problems and find out their solutions in amicable manner.

Vijay Tendulkar was born in 1928 in Kolhapur, Maharashtra. He was born and brought up in Kandevali, a small lane. He was living in a typical chawl, in apartments of one room, kitchen, balcony and common, dingy toilets. So Tendulkar's upbringing in a lower middle class community provided him chance and scope to perceive middle class minutely which helped him portray its different shades on the stage.

His father Mr. Dhondopant Tendulkar was a head clerk at a British publishing firm called Longmans Green and Company (Now Orient
and his mother, Mrs. Susheela Tendulkar was a housewife. His father was a writer, director and actor of amateur Marathi plays. He did not join the commercial drama company, as formerly a career in the theatre was not regarded respectable. Four years old Vijay Tendulkar used to accompany his father to the rehearsals, thereby he nurtured and cultivated love for the theatre from his childhood. He himself considered those rehearsals a kind of “Magic show” because like magic he saw the living beings change into characters. He saw with wonder the tranvestitive roles by changing their voice and gait. His father was a clerk and also ran a small publishing house. There was literary environment at home which prompted Vijay Tendulkar to take up writing. Tendulkar had another brother named Raghunath and sister Leela. His two elder sisters died in infancy. He had two younger brothers but he was the favourite child of his parents. He was a sickly child and suffering from cough and asthmatic wheezing, therefore, special care, protection and love were showered by the parents for fear of losing him if not protected well. He was given the pet name “Papia” and above all he was known as a “mother’s child” being favourite of his mother. Emotionally he was more endeared to his mother than his father. He mesmerizes the moments when his mother used to feed him forcefully.

Owing to his unsupportive physique, the family servant used to take him to the municipal school. As usual it had small dingy rooms with awful toilets and no playgrounds. In the school also special attention was given to him as he belonged to somewhat well to do family among other marginalized pupils. His teachers used to borrow story books from him and by becoming partial they left him alone at the examination. Thus he studied in an average Indian school which has no basic facilities but he carries those moments in comparison with sophisticated school where he studied later in life. Upto nine years of age he attended “Chikisaha samooha” where he found himself totally strange among the sophisticated children and spacious buildings.
Tendulkar surprisingly started his career as a writer at a very early stage of life. He wrote stories and essays when he was six years of age. The unpublished work of his father lay at home and little Tendulkar passed his time with books and read novel and short stories of eminent writers and thus he grew up in a literary atmosphere. The seed had already been sown in little mind for literature and gradually it took the shape of a gigantic tree.

Vijay Tendulkar had never imagined himself to be a writer in his childhood. As a small child he wanted to be an engine driver or an acrobat in circus and dreamt of wandering from place to place astonishing the crowd by daredevil acts. He used to visit fairs and circus with his father which was like big fairyland for him. So, childlike curiosity, interest and amazement tickled him along with his keen interest in reading. Sunday and vacation had special attraction for him. His father used to take him to a large bookshop of his friend where he got the books of his choice. In the evening his father took him to Chowpatty beach and they travelled in train from Charni Road to Colaba which attracted him a lot. During summer vacation the family used to go to Goa or to Port Ratnagiri.

Tendulkar remembers that his father was a strict disciplinarian, impractical, stubborn but an honest man. “To be honest is a disqualification in today’s world” and so Mr. Dhondopant Tendulkar never got the honour of being honest and idealist. But he felt proud to be poor and was very much content with life. Due to this the later life of his father was miserable. His father was against the dowry system and so Tendulkar’s sister Leela didn’t get married and had to remain single. It seems that the father had never got family love due to certain principles.

His brother, Raghunath, was a follower of Gandhi and Gandhian principles. He used to attend political congregations. His father wanted him to be actively participated in studies but he went astray. Tendulkar used to get gifts like pastries, sweets and pen and used to go for English movies with his brother. Unfortunately his brother died untimely due to alcoholic habit.
The later childhood of Tendulkar passed at Kolhapur - a princely state in Maharashtra. Here he made himself noticeable by his excellence in reciting English poems. When he was 11 years old, he wrote and directed and acted "Maya Bazaar". This way, the journey of this veteran writer towards performing arts started. At Kolhapur his friend was the son of one prominent playwright named Navi K Kulkarni who shared the same literary interest with Tendulkar and even worked as a child artist in two Marathi films.

As a teenager, at the age of 13 the family shifted to Pune and he attended a new school. He believes that he might have completed matriculation but the Quit India Movement was in momentum and Tendulkar was one of those who obeyed Gandhi's call to boycott the school. He started taking part in campaign against the British and used to attend the early morning meetings without informing his parents. At the age of 14 while attending such meetings, he was arrested and the family came to know about Tendulkar's active participation in freedom struggle. Lonely and sad, writing became his outlet. Tendulkar tells Mukta Rajyadhyaksha in an interview:

I participated in a small way in the 1942 movement. Owing to that, I stayed away from school a lot and was often humiliated whenever I turned up in class. I was confused, a loner without many friends, not much of a talker. Writing was an outlet for emotions. (MWAH)

Most of these early writings were of a personal nature and not intended for publication. Again he attended the school but now he started bunking the classes and developed the habit of spending the monthly fees of the school in watching English films. The visuals had a gigantic impact on him and this exposure to the theatre at an early age has had its strong influence on him as a successful dramatist. He, in a lecture titled, “The
Play is the Thing” tells audiences, “I always feel that this first hand repeated experience of the mystique of the theatre has something to do with my being drawn to the theatre” (xiii). He, when asked by Gowri Ramnarayan about his playwriting, in an interview, perspicuously ruminates:

As a school boy I had watched the Hollywood films playing in my hometown, not once, but each one over and over again. I still remember the visuals, not the dialogues which I didn't understand. A more conscious education in what the visual could do came when I worked with the Rangayan Theatre group in Bombay, but watching Marcel Marceau from the last seat in the last row was an enthralling experience. Not a single word was uttered, but so much was expressed. After that I wrote mimes for quite a while. I felt the visual had unlimited possibilities, the word was useless. But I am a playwright, words are my tools, I had to use them. (ANMS)

Apart from films he utilized his time at the city library in reading that helped him a lot during his career as a journalist. But his father was disappointed seeing the bleak prospects of Tendulkar.

At Pune, Tendulkar found the role model of his life - Dinkar Bal Krishna Mokashi, a radio mechanic but a good writer who led a very simple life and Tendulkar was mesmerized by his personality and lucidity of writing style. In his style he emulates Vishnu Vinayak Bokil, a teacher and writer with light hearted, jovial and exuberant in style. He remembers one incident of the school when Mr. Vinayak asked the students to look at the names of rank holders of the school on the board and asked: "Where are those top rankers now? Does anyone know?" He advised them to groom their personality in other directions also. It worked as a catalyst to the teen Tendulkar to look beyond the school. Later on, as a writer Tendulkar dedicated one of his books to this school teacher, Mr. Vinayak. At 16,
Tendulkar left the school for good. He had no friends and severed communication with his parents. Now he started communicating with himself. And he put all his dialogues to his own self on paper through various forms - poems, stories, film scripts and at this stage of life, his writing acquired a conscientious motivation.

Vijay Tendulkar penned his first full length original play, *Grihastha* at the age of 22, which flopped like anything and he took an oath that he would never write a play in life and surprisingly he has written 28 full length plays as well as he has been working actively in the theatrical world for the last 45 years.

Tendulkar’s career began with his writings for the newspapers. He had already written a play *Amchyavar Kon Prem Karnar* (*Who Will Love Us?*) and *Grihastha* (*The Householder*) in his early 20s. *Grihastha* did not receive recognition. However, in 1956, he wrote *Shrimant*, which established his reputation as a good writer. In this play, Tendulkar attacked the conservative ideas of the times with its radical storyline. In this play he delineates a young unmarried woman who decides to keep her unborn child. His rich father tries to buy her a husband to save himself from social stigma. Living in tenements (Chawls) in Mumbai in his early struggling life, he got the first hand experience of life of urban lower middle class. The depiction of these experiences was brought with new authenticity in Marathi theatre. Modern Marathi theatre got a change with these experimental presentations by theatre groups like Rangayan during 1950s and 60s. Various actors also gave new authenticity and power to Tendulkar’s stories with new sensibilities in Marathi theatre. These famous actors were Shriram Lagoo, Mohan Agashe, Sulabha Deshpande etc. *Gidhade* (*The Vultures*) (1961) was a play, proved to be a turning point in his own writings with the establishment of his own unique writing style. We find a variety of styles and colourfulness in his dramas. As he pleads to Makarand Sathe in a documentary:
In my writing, I like to give more priority to the dramatic purpose rather than structure and style, thus, style and structure only move to be a complement for the dramatic purpose. (Tendulkar and Violence---)

This play was set in a morally collapsed family structure and thus it exposes the theme of violence. Later in his other plays, he delineates violence in various other forms like domestic, communal, sexual, political etc. (Silence! The Court is in Session) Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe (1956) was based on a short story Die Panne by Friendrich Durrenmatt. It was presented on the stage in 1967 and it gained a wide acclaim. In 1971, it was adapted in to movie form by Satyadev Dubey in which Tendulkar himself acted as a screenplay writer.

The period of 1970s and 80s was very significant in Tendulkar’s life as he remained very active and engrossed in the field of writing and wrote important plays like Sakharam Binder and Ghashiram Kotwal. In Sakharam Binder, Tendulkar deals with the theme of patriarchal dominance through eponymous character, Sakharam, a man devoid of ethics and morality, professes not to follow outmoded social rules and conventional marriage system. He gives shelters to abandoned wives, however, exploits them for his sexual gratification and other household comforts. He gives hollow arguments to justify his action and to enslave hapless women. He remains oblivious to emotional and moral implications of the exploited women. In Ghashiram Kotwal, Tendulkar deals with the theme of political violence. He uses traditional Marathi folk music and contemporary theatre techniques. This play is set in 18th century Pune. It is a political satire and shows how a man has so much rapaciousness for ends and in order to attain that he sells his daughter too.

Tendulkar also wrote screenplays for movies Nishant (1974), Akrosh (The Cry) (1980), Ardh Satya (The Half-Truth) (1984) which establish him as “Chronicler of Violence”. He also wrote eleven movies in
Hindi and eight movies in Marathi like *Samana* (Confrontation) (1975), *Simhaasan* (Throne) (1979), and *Umbartha* (The Threshold) (1981). *Umbartha* is a feature film on women activism in India. Smita Patil and Girish Karnad acted in the film and Jabbar Patel had directed it.

*Safar* is a metaphorical play written by Tendulkar in 1991 and much later in 2001, he wrote *The Masseur*. He wrote two novels also; *Kadambari: Ek* and *Kadambari: Don*. In these two novels he espouses the theme of sexual fantasies of an aging man. Then his one-act play *His Fifth Women* which is his first play in English language. It is also taken as a sequel to *Sakaram Binder*. This play was first acted on stage in New York at Vijay Tendulkar Festival in October 2004. In 1990s Tendulkar wrote an acclaimed TV series, *Swayam Siddha*, in which his daughter Priya Tendulkar played the lead role. His last screenplay was for *Eashwar Mime Co.* (2005). He always considers himself to be a writer first and playwright afterwards. About his passion for writing he clarifies:

The point is more than a playwright, I consider myself to be a writer-meaning I loved to indulge in the physical process of writing. I enjoy this process even when there is nothing to be said. Give me a piece of paper any paper and pen and I shall write as naturally as a bird flies or a fish swims. Left to myself, I scribble. And I never get tired of writing... Especially when I write in my mother tongue i.e. Marathi. Writing gives me a pleasure which has no substitute. However, tired I am physically or mentally, the moment I pick up the pen and begin running it on a paper-any piece of paper I feel good I feel refreshed I feel as if I am born again. Writing by itself is a luxury for me. When I write, I forget my self, I forget my anxieties... *(The Guardian Aug.19, 2008)*
He used to write editorials with the information received from the second hand sources. Amar Nath Prasad and Satish Barbuddhe aptly write, “He was not satisfied with the ‘second hand’ information which he got, while sitting in the newspaper office. In his study tours he got ‘first hand’ information of the outside world” (vi). And this filled him with great dissatisfaction. He says in an interview, “It started with my journalistic dissatisfaction but it grew into much bigger proportions in the sense that it became a matter of conscience as a human being. I became restless” (*IEM* March 27).

The violence, the oppression and the exploitation that he witnessed and experienced in the society made him restless and tristful. As journalism could not offer him a viable solution for his mental agitation, it did shape his journey into dramatic career. Gowri Ramnarayan, therefore points out, "With his exposure to Marathi theatre from childhood, and journalistic background Vijay Tendulkar turned contemporary socio-political situations into explosive drama.” (*ANMS* 12) His desire was to start a daily newspaper column and he enjoyed writing a column for six months in 1993, when Babri Masjid was destroyed. And during those six months he didn’t write anything but only enjoyed column writing. He very well remembers that during his journalistic days he sometimes wrote for astrology column, when the ‘official’ astrologer did not reach in time and he enjoyed in forecasting bright future for the unknown readers of the column. As a writer he found good fun in playing the role of an astrologer.

Being versatile writer, he can fit himself into any role. During the period of struggle he did ghost writing knowing fully well that his name would not appear or become known to the readers. His inner personality as a writer underwent a natural change to suit the role. Along with his job in a newspaper he started writing short stories and plays and even ghost writing for additional income. His writing developed in consonance with the demands of the roles. He also worked as a Public Relation Officer in an industry and espoused for add-agencies. He translated American books for
the United Information Services and wrote scripts for non-descript government documentaries. He played different roles in order to earn his livelihood but his writing practice has brought perfection in scripting-dexterity.

As a sensitive, sensible and responsible citizen, Vijay Tendulkar could not quiet his agitated conscience with his journalistic career. So he left journalism when he received Nehru Fellowship for the 1973-75. During this period, he travelled extensively throughout India and saw for himself all kinds of violence and upheavals around him. From this experience he infers:

Unlike communists I don’t think that violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or, for that matter, in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that the human being is born with. Not that it’s bad. Without violence man would have turned into a vegetable. (*FP* 207)

Tendulkar does not subscribe to any particular set of ideology as these are unqualified and inapt to understand the complex human situations and to suggest any viable solution to our hydra-headed problems. Nor does he lack political awareness which forms the basis of Indian socio-political fabric. Tendulkar was actively associated with ‘civil liberties movements’ in Maharashtra and all this shows his great concern for his country and society. He is a realist and refuses to be fooled by romantic concepts of reforms and movements. He exposes the flaws and the inevitable failure of unrealistic reforms and movements in his plays.

He considers himself to be an actor-writer and acted on the stage during his apprentice days in the theatre but did not find it as exciting as writing. He was an actor on the stage of his creative mind. According to him he acts as he writes in his mind he emotes the lives of the character as he writes. They are not written words but a total and spontaneous expression of the mind and personality of the character which includes not
only the words but also the eloquent silence in between the words-broken sentences, the subtle emphasis on certain words, even the pitch of the voice, the gestures of the hands. He can visualize the position of the characters on the stage - the total composition of the scene and even the lighting. Thus he acted speech, behavior patterns, demeanor and their ways of looking at things; he, therefore, believes he can act better than others because he has acted his play out when he wrote the play. Tendulkar was basically a man of theatre which he had inherited from his father and elder brother. He had a curiosity for this performing art and subconscious and unquenched desire to explore the magic and beauty of this form. His propensity for theatrical nuances continued as he wrote plays at school, acted in plays, watched it, discussed it and for the last 45 years he has been in the world of theatre. He believes that performing art is a sort of positive addiction. He demystifies, “You can learn the grammar but art is not mere grammar. It is an expression; it provides endless learning by experiments, by committing mistakes” (Urvashi 85).

At a very early stage of his life he developed curiosity for people and consciously noted the articulative nuances of manners and personal idiosyncrasies which give an expression to it in his writing. The characters would appear in utter chaos till he conceives it. He prioritizes his dramaturgy and could never write a play with only idea or theme in mind but he needed verisimilitude of character. He speculatively writes:

I could not proceed to write a play unless I saw my characters as real life people, unless I could see them moving, doing things by themselves unless I heard them emoting, talking to each other. I was never able to begin writing my play only with an idea or a theme in mind. I had to have my characters first with me… (TPT 15)
Thus, they are not puppets or caricatures but living persons from day-to-day life. His characters epitomize the real working human beings who fit in the larger fabric of societal issues.

About the structuring of his plays, he avers, he had never attended any courses for this skills but he had learnt it by trial and error method which is very costly. One has to own money in experimental theatre. No one sponsors the play and by the time the players correct the mistakes, they are doing the swan song of the play. For him, the rehearsal hall had become the learning ground. In absence of theatrical devices, the inner mechanisms of the play with its positive and negative points were laid open and he learnt a lot from these brain-storming rehearsal sessions. The rehearsals also bolstered him in internalizing the techniques of playwriting - especially the structuring of the play.

Vijay Tendulkar also learnt by watching films because a film has to have a structure. Even the concerts of classical music impressed him though he did not know its grammar, despite the fact that classical music has its strict rules and regulations. The reading of the poems replenished him with the knowledge about compact structure and form. The visit to the art galleries made him aware about the rhythm, form and structure in good painting. Apart from all these, Peter Brook's book, *Master Craftsman in the Art of Theatre*, taught him the foremost principles of theatre-world that all visual art including the art of the theatre have one thing in common- the space, and it is the adroitness of the dramatist with which he meaningfully and ingeniously fills the space. Arundhati Banerjee comments:

Tendulkar's first major work that set him apart from previous generation Marathi playwrights was *Manus Navache Bet (An Island called Man)* (1955). His dramatic genius was cutout for the newly emerging experimental Marathi theatre of the time. His direct association with Rangayan at this point of his career and continous interaction with such theatre
personalities as Vijaya Mehta, Arvind and Sulabha Despande. Kamalakar Sarang Madhav Vatve and Damoo Kenkre provided new impetus for creative faculties. Thus Manus Navache Bet was closely followed by a spate of plays. Madhlya Bhinti (The walls Between) Chimnicha Ghar Hota Menacha (Nest of wax) (1958) Mee Jinklo Mee Harlo (I won, I lost) (1963) Kavlanchi Shala (school for crows) (1963) and Sari Ga Sari (Rain o Rain) (1964) which would chart the course of avant-garde Marathi theatre during the next few years. There seems to be a consistency of theme and treatment in them despite the apparently desperate nature of their subjects. In all these early plays, Tendulkar is concerned with the middle class individual set against the backdrop of hostile society. (FP 570)

Most of Tendulkar’s plays are in the naturalistic writing. His Ghashiram Kotwal, however, is in the folk tradition while his last two plays Niyatiya Bailala (To Hell with Destiny) and Safar (The Tour) employ fantasy. The play Silence! The court is in session (1967) made him the centre of controversy. He has already been labelled as an angry young man of the Marathi theatre. He was considered a rebel against the established values of a fundamentally orthodox society. Encounter in Umbugland (1974) is a political allegory (1971). The Vultures shocked the conservative sections of Marathi people with its naturalistic display of cupidity, sex, and violence. Sakharam Binder (1972) is probably Tendulkar's most intensely naturalistic play and shocked the conservative society even more than The Vultures. In Ghashiram Kotwal (1972) he moves from the photo realistic writing into the folk tradition; it explains the power game that inheres the intricacies of Indian politics. Kamala (1981) is based on a real life incident reported in “The Indian Express” by Ashwin Sarin. Kanyadaan is also one of the controversial plays and branded as
anti-dalit play. He was awarded the Saraswati Samman for this play. While speaking at the award ceremony, Tendulkar revealed that once he had a “slipper hurled at him for this play” (Afterward 71). Tendulkar received awards and honours as well as curses and invectives at the same time for his plays. Arundhati Banerjee appropriately comments, “Tendulkar is both a venerated as well as controversial figure in the country’s theatre scene” (FP vii). Vijay Tendulkar’s plays usually mire in controversies. The subjects of his dramas, his diatribes, and his interviews intertwining circumstances render him controversial.

Some people accuse him that he knows the pulse of media and publicity and for the sake of success of his plays he rakes up rhubarbs. When Makarand Sathe asked him about it, he reacted:

I don’t know about success, I don’t know why people felt that way but I think I was very honest and responsible regarding my statements. And if you want to talk about success, I must have to submit that I am very successful to share my thoughts. (A Documentary)

Tendulkar wrote his plays in Marathi. First, he influenced Marathi theatre and squarely guided it. Later, the impact of his writing extended to other Indian languages as his plays were translated into them. Tendulkar perceived the realities of the human society without any preconceived notions, reacted to them as a sensitive and sensible human being and wrote about them in his plays as a responsibly concerned writer. He never wrote to win a prize or an award. He opines:

I have written about my own experience and about what I have seen in others around me. I have been true to all this and have not cheated my generation. I did not attempt to simplify matters and issues for the audience when presenting my plays, though that would have been easier occupation.
Sometimes my plays jolted society out of its stupor and I was punished. I faced this without regrets. It is an old habit with me to do what I am told not to do. My plays could not have been anything else. They contain my perceptions of society and its value and I cannot write what I do not perceive. (CP Appendix iv)

In his plays he deals with the issues of gender inequality, social imbalance, power games, self-alienation, sex and violence. His characters are neither completely good nor bad. He liberated Marathi stage from the tyranny of conventional theatre with its mild doses of social and political satire for purpose of pure entertainment. M. Sarat Babu, moreover, mentions in his book, *Vijay Tendulkar's Ghashiram Kotwal: A Reader's Companion*:

Vijay Tendulkar portrays the contemporary society and the predicament of man in it with a special focus on the morbidity in his plays, which remind us of Nietzsche's words “the disease called man” and also Freud's description of human civilization as “a universal neurosis”. His plays touch almost every aspect of human life in the modern world and share the disillusionment of the post modern intellectuals; however they seem to highlight three major issues: gender, power and violence. (26)

Vijay Tendulkar, delivering the prestigious Sri Ram Memorial Lectures, recapitulated his lifelong involvement in the world of theatre:

What I like about those years is that they made me grow as a human being. And theatre which was my major concern has contributed to this in a big way. It helped me to analyze my own life and the lives of others. It led me to make newer and
newer discoveries in the vast realm of the human mind which still defies all available theories and logic. It is like an ever intriguing puzzle or a jungle which you can always enter but has no way out… (ii)

This legendary theatre man passed away on 19th May, 2008. He was suffering from Myasthenia Gravis, a neuromuscular disease. He died at the age of 80 in a private hospital at Pune. According to his wish his last rites were performed at the Vaikanth electric crematorium and prominent theatre and film personalities including Mohan Agashe, Satish Alekar, Haider Ali, Amruta Subhash, Amol Palekar and Atul Pethe, University of Pune Vice-chancellor Narendra Jadhav paid last tributes to Tendulkar at the crematorium.

Tendulkar’s writing career span was more than five decades. Many plays have been translated in many Indian languages and performed too. His voice became the strongest radical political voice in Maharashtra. He very courageously and categorically exposed the political hegemony and the hypocrisies of the powerful in the Indian social mindset. For this, he also gained public acclaim and high censure from the orthodox and the political bigwigs simultaneously. Many of the issues in his plays were derived from real-life incidents or social upheavals. Ghashiram Kotwal reflects the rise of Shivsena in Maharashtra in the 1970s. Kamala deals with the true story of a journalist who purchased a woman from flesh market in order to expose the police and political involvement in the flesh trade. After using her, he abandons her. Then Mitrachi Goshta (A Friend’s Story) reveals the real-life story of an actress whose acting career got mired after her same-sex affair became open secret.

Tendulkar translated nine novels, two biographies and five plays by other authors into Marathi. Tendulkar wrote a biography, two novels, five anthologies of short stories, 16 plays for children, five volumes of literary essays and social criticism. All in all, he has transformed the modern
literary landscape in Marathi and other modern languages. In 2005, a documentary was released on Tendulkar named Tendulkar Ani Himsa: Kal Ani Aj (Tendulkar and Violence: Then and Now) with its English subtitles. A short film about Tendulkar Ankahin was released in 2007.

Tendulkar won many awards and honours. Maharashtra State Government award was conferred on him three times in 1956, 1969 and 1972 and ‘Maharashtra Gauraw Puraskar’ in 1999. ‘Sangeet Natak Academy Award’ in 1970 and again in 1998 the highest award for lifetime contribution, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship (Ratna Sadasya). He was also honoured with the Padma Bhushan by Government of India for his literary acumen. In 1977, Tendulkar won National Film Award for the best screenplay for Shyam Benegal’s movie Manthan (1976). He has written screenplays for many significant art movies, like Nishant, Akrsoh and Ardh Satya. In 1993, he won Saraswati Samman, in 1999, Kalidas Samman in 2001, Katha Chudamani Award in 2006, the Little Magazine Salam Award, etc.

In the post-Independence Indian Theatre, Tendulkar has brought a sea change in the world of drama because he stirred the sensibility of the conservative audience with the projection of stark realities of life, relationship and existence. He has presented the modern society with all its true colours. With the portrayal of modern man’s predicament, challenges, difficulties and complexities, his characters present the verisimilitude of life. There is no question on the part of playwright to moralize them. He rejects the idealized depiction of life and adopts to write in naturalistic vein. He not only portrays happy and gleeful elements rather touch every aspect of human weaknesses, follies and foibles. His plays are considered to be amoral rather than moral ones. Tendulkar is a kind of silent social activist who wishes to bring a change in people’s thinking, feeling and deportment. He wants to make people conscious towards life with all their vices and limitations. And for this he can, therefore, be called as an
optimist. And audiences are left to ponder about the removal of such rubbish from the society.

English drama saw the new light of humanism and realism against the philosophical creed of Tagore and Sri Aurobindo with the emergence of the trio of Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad. Tendulkar has not only carved a niche as a Marathi writer but also modified the Indian drama with his powerful writings and represented the issues which are temporal as well as timeless. Tendulkar’s works have been translated into English and other Indian languages and it is through his oeuvre that, he is acknowledged as a potent force in contemporary Indian English drama. Arundhati Banerjee in introduction of *Five Plays* rightly remarks, “Vijay Tendulkar has been in the vanguard of not just Marathi but Indian theatre for almost forty years” (vii).

Tendulkar is the first Marathi playwright who has transformed the regional theatre into the national theatre. Audiences by witnessing his plays enacted on stage get the idea of country’s national theatre and its rich and varied dramaturgical legacy and theatrical culture. He has given a new dimension to modern Marathi theatre as well. His plays disturb the audience by raising complex issues that remain unsettled even today in the contemporary society. This very complex and subtle nature of his plays gives him a place of pride on the international firmament. He is at the same time subjective and objective, personal and impersonal, particular and general, individual and social and finally, local and cosmopolitan. His motive gets emulated to the universal level. Tendulkar was a journalist and this tendency molded his creative talent to produce the plays which tend to expose the naked realities of society. Tendulkar’s journalistic background sharpens his objective and narrative style of writing. According to N.S.Dharan, “Tendulkar’s creative genius sharpened by his keen observation and seasoned by journalistic experience, found expression in his plays” (93). His art of drama is also applauded as by Chander Shekhar Barve in his book *Contemporary Indian Drama*, “His extra dramatic
writing also reveals his pure taste for drama which tries to capture the different tensions and through them finds dramatics accurately” (25).

From his first play Grihasth (1955) to Safar in (1992), his plays have given Indian theatre a rich and challenging tradition. With these experiments, he evolved new theatrical traditions by breaking the tradition of well wrought plays and represented the contemporary social reality. He takes recourse to the expressionistic technique for this. Tendulkar through his plays raised a voice against the oppression of the individual in conventional social codes. He draws his subject from his observations of life, from newspaper reports or incidents narrated to him. Tendulkar as a journalist saw violence, oppression and ubiquitous exploitation in the society and felt restless to represent it through theatre.

Tendulkar’s writing very clearly underpins his assumption that violence is integrated in human self and is expressed through various forms with man’s hapless defense against the adversity of human conditions. He confesses in an interview:

Unlike communists, I don’t think that violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or for that matter in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that the human being is born with. Not that it’s bad. Without violence man would have turned into a vegetable. (India Today Dec.16-31)

He categorically admits that life is dark and cruel and behind every truth, there lies cruelty which is must for survival in contemporary society. He widely studies numerous patterns of violence ranging from individual violence to political upheavals. Tendulkar endeavors to investigate violence in all its nuances and forms: domestic, communal, sexual and political violence. As Jabbar Patel evaluates:

He first depicted violence in his earlier work, Shrimant, that way Gidhade turned out to be a turning point. For a first time
Tendulkar came into his own terms and projects his explicit writing style through his characters for the first time. (Web Interview)

According to Tendulkar, violence can be perceived everywhere like in personal relationships, in politics, in judicial and administrative setup. He, when interviewed by Elizabeth Roy, elucidates:

… not as something that exists in isolation but as a part of human milieu, human behaviour, human mind. It has become an obsession. At a very sensitive level, violence can be described as consciously hurting someone, whether it is physical violence or psychological violence … Violence is something which has to be accepted as fact. It’s no use describing it as good or bad. Projection of it can be good or bad. And violence when turned into something else, can certainly be defined as vitality, which can be very useful, very constructive. So it depends on how you utilize it or curb it at times. (Indian Review of Books xii-xiii)

Almost all the critics have given opinions on his works. Before going further to understand the critique of society, we should first try to define society and its integral constituents. A society, according to sociologists, is a group of people with common territory, interaction and culture. They may or may not be related to one another but share the same geographical or virtual territory with the same political authority. A society can enable its members to benefit in ways that would not otherwise be possible on an individual basis, both individual and social (Common) benefits can thus be distinguished, or in many cases found to overlap. Critique embodies an in-depth analysis of a work wherein the different components of that work are given recommendations for improvement. Critiques are perhaps most popular and dynamic parameters in the working
world. So, we see that with the increase of commercialization, the old traditions and rituals have diminutive significance. A sense of insecurity and loss of self have gripped an individual in the contemporary society. The term social criticism locates the reasons for malicious conditions of the society in flawed social structures. People adhering to a social criticism aim at practical solutions by specific measures, often consensual reforms but sometimes by powerful revolution. Tendulkar also holds the same stance in this context.

One of the major themes in Vijay Tendulkar’s works is the issue of oppression on the basis of gender. Tendulkar was obsessed with individual rights for liberty. He envisions the stage to produce the voice of protest against all pervasive exploitations. He speculates:

The writer in me is more analytical than emotionally committed one way or the other. The writer in me raises inconvenient question instead of choosing his side and passionately claiming thereafter that it is always the right one ... As a social being I am against all exploitation and passionately feel that all exploitation must end. (A Testament 15)

The play Silence! The Court is in session (1967), the first play written by Tendulkar, affirmed his reputation as a rebel because it was a protest against the established conventions and the outmoded canons of society. Tendulkar is in favour of new possibilities for the marginalized sections of society. Through the protagonist, Miss Leela Benare, Tendulkar predominantly exposes the male dominated society’s cruelty piled on an innocent woman. He also shows how resources of power are misused to inflict pain and torture on the woman, who is pregnant through illegitimate relationship; whereas man, who is equally responsible for the consequences is not even mentioned in the crime and is absent from that occasion. The
Play is organized in the form of mock trial. Structure of plot evidences the technique of play within the play. Mainly two issues are raised in the play. One is the apathetic attitude of society towards the dignity of woman and secondly the preplanned mechanism of power structure. Miss Benare, the central character, is a school teacher who maintains her own philosophy of the emancipation and joyous living. She vehemently challenges by saying, “Who are these people to say what I can or can’t do? My life is my own I haven’t sold it to anyone for a job. My will is my own” (*Silence!* 58).

Through this type of challenges which Tendulkar puts forth, the conservative people are bamboozled and unhinged. Tendulkar wants to destroy all these stereotyped beliefs and outdated pieties. The complex and problematic nature of his plays depict reality in the naked and vulgar form. It becomes difficult for anyone to appreciate or accept the incident but at the same time reality is inevitable. So, the audience leaves the theatre with perturbed mind. At this point one can see Tendulkar as an iconoclast as he intends to bring a silent and gradual change in the attitude of people intertwined in the societal problems of life.

In Tendulkar’s plays, one can have a glimpse of the impact of such great Western playwrights as Tennesse Williams, Arthur Miller and Brecht. But there is superb touch of Indianess in his treatment. He uses various folk traditions, like, *tamasha*, a folk form that is related only to Marathi theatre and the modes of recitation and storytelling which are specific to the region and some of Sanskrit theatre like *nandi* i.e. prayer to Lord Ganesha at the beginning of play, and *Sutradhara* i.e. like of chorus in Greek drama, are used effectively. By doing so, Tendulkar tries to bridge the gap between traditional and modern Indian theatre.

The play *The Vultures* was originally written in Marathi under the title *Gidhade* in which the dramatist manipulates various types of violence, emerging out of drunkenness, greed, sexual aberration and immorality, anticipating a complete collapse of value system, sanctity of family and familial responsibilities, man’s disobedience towards social orders and
moral principles. Tendulkar has given the fractured images of characters and through this he delineates the growing sickness of modern man. He also avers that this modern man is morally invalid and mentally disabled. Girish Karnad said about the staging of *Gidhade*, “it could be compared to the blasting of a bomb in an otherwise complacent market place” (*CP 575-76*). The title *The Vultures* is itself suggestive of Tendulkar’s obsession with violence, ferocity and instant urge for killing. Tendulkar seems to portray these evils which are inherent in human nature and are getting flourished in big amount in the postmodern industrial society where there is great absence of dominating religio-ethical codes. Arundhati Benerjee, commenting on the play observes:

> The play is a ruthless dissection of human nature revealing its inherent tendencies to violence, avarice, selfishness, sensuality and sheer wickedness … The decadence and degeneration of individual belonging to a middle-class milieu is exposed through the interactions among the members of the family. (*CP 575-76*)

The play revolves around the unorganized family of Hari Pitale who deceives his own brother in business. His own children, Ramakant, Umakant and daughter Manik, all are greedy, cruel, egocentric and wayward and they do not have penchant for any kind of morality towards family or towards their relationship. There is so dense environment of violence that leaves a strong feeling of distrust on audience’s mind. There is constant screeching of vultures on the stage. Through this play Tendulkar suggests how the emerging impact of materialistic values and western style are ruining the structural fabric of Indian families. The triumph of evil in the consciousness of different characters is suggested through this screeching of the sound echoing throughout the play. The
post-modernist analysis of the text of the play makes it a milestone in the realm of Indian English drama. Beena Aggarwal avers:

Violence in *The Vultures* operates in a series of axes-sons against father, brother against sister, each leading to an exile from homes, followed by a series of returns / reversal, the exiles attempting to avenge themselves. (28)

Tendulkar’s plays are neither just to entertain nor to reveal ironies and contradictions; they are there to help man to know himself with relation to society. He depicts agonies and sufferings of man and his helplessness in the vortex of societal problems. The plays produce a feeling of pity and terror which bear cathartic effect.

*Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972) is his most celebrated and widely acclaimed play. Tendulkar’s vision in this play is directed against the prevalent evil and corruption in politics as well as in administrative dispensation. One more difference from other plays is that he uses folk tradition instead of using the tradition of naturalism. The play is a vitriolic satire on Brahministic feudalism which alludes to the deterioration of values in society where caste wields the supreme authority. Ghashiram, the protagonist, comes to Poona from Kanauj for livelihood and takes shelter in the house of Gulabi, who is a courtesan, and accompanies her in erotic songs and dance. One day, forgetting that he is a Brahmin, takes king’s aching foot in his hands which earns him his favour. He is, sometimes later, also incarcerated for the suspicion of theft. Ghashiram feels himself humiliated and revenge grips his consciousness. He becomes impatient to capture power in Poona, and for which he even offers his young daughter, Gauri as a sacrificial goat to the king, Nana. Nana enjoys the company of Gauri and makes Ghashiram the Kotwal of Poona as a reward. Ghashiram with this political power lambasts all sorts of cruelty on the public of Poona. Gauri becomes pregnant and Nana in order to hide his guilt kills Gauri. Ghashiram becomes mad out of fury and starts persecuting the
people cruelly. Now Nana has no need of Ghashiram, so he dismisses Ghashiram from the post of Kotwal. And this lust for power takes everything from Ghashiram, his daughter, his status. And finally he becomes a victim of power politics. Samik Bandyopadhaya sums up, “Tendulkar in his social criticism is more concerned with the mechanism of power operating within society than with economics and political implications and the sources of that power” (CP 591). Tendulkar has not created Nana and Ghashiram as merely historical characters, but as the symbol of deteriorating values in politics. Beena Aggarwal elucidates:

Tendulkar not only identifies the ‘disease’ but also makes a pathological investigation where he finds the virus of greed, sexuality, economic exploitation and intrigues that makes politics a cancer for the entire society.(143)

Tendulkar’s plays have one remarkable feature, i.e. there is an actual portrayal of life with all its basic aspects which are integral part of human nature. It is not an idealized picture of society. The audience can, however, see the playwright’s revolt against the conventional norms and also his motive for new code of conduct. His characters are just like us, made of the same clay as we are, with all our flaws and failings but aspire for peace, happiness and freedom. Tendulkar too seems to have views like Karl Marx that human beings should suffer like human beings not like animals. In all his depiction of character construction, he appears to be a keen observer who neither praises nor condemns his characters for their cruelty or tender-heartedness.

Tendulkar’s dexterity of handling his characters is very much manifest in Sakharam Binder (1974) which shocked the conservative society even more than The Vultures. It was first staged on 10th March 1972. For the first time, his ‘bold’ portrayal of characters like Sakharam and Champa stormed the stage. The play is all about the expose of
hypocrisy, jealousy and lust of the middle class people. The protagonist, Sakharam is a womanizer who sexually exploits women and then discards them. He is a disbeliever in the institution of marriage. He says, “It’s a good thing I’m not a husband” (129). He picks up other men’s discarded women, cast off wives who would otherwise be homeless, destitute or murdered with impunity and takes them as domestic servants and indirectly as sex partners. He lives in his home like a truant and gives hollow arguments to prove himself as libertine. He pretentiously says that, she is free to leave, whenever she likes, he will give her a sari and fifty rupees and a ticket to wherever she wants to go. Tendulkar through Sakharam Binder demonstrates the double standards of morality of the institution like family and society. And he conceived the image of angry young man like John Osborn’s Jimmy Porter in the play Look back in Anger. The play exposes the life of Sakharam in context of two women – Laxmi and Champa. Both of them represent two different sides of feminine consciousness. Laxmi is a deserted woman who takes shelter in Sakharam’s house. She, like an ideal Indian woman, bows to the authoritarian attitude of Sakharam. She gives all comforts to Sakharam. But she leaves the place of Sakharam after being disgusted with the wildness of Sakharam. Champa, who is foil to Laxmi, comes to Sakharam’s house after Laxmi has gone. Unlike Laxmi, she imposes her own authority on Sakharam. His male masochism becomes weak in front of Champa’s youth and beauty. She tries to overpower the life of Sakharam. Finding him impotent, she turns to Dawood. This turning towards Dawood, exposes the garb of male chauvinism adopted by Sakharam. This feeling of alienation and violence in Sakharam’s psyche drives him to kill Champa. Laxmi, due to her own hidden desires, encouraged him to bury the body of Champa. So, Tendulkar exposes the socio-psychological dimensions of violence and disintegration of human self against the social conventions.
Kamala (1981) was inspired by a real life incident – the Indian Express expose by Ashwin Sarin who actually bought a girl from rural flesh market and presented at a press conference. By using this incident as a launching pad, Tendulkar raises certain cardinal issues related to the value system of a modern, success oriented generation which is ready to sacrifice human values in the name of humanity itself. Jai Singh Jadhav, the central character of the play, is a self-seeking journalist, ill-treats the woman, Kamala, he has purchased from the flesh market as an object that can give him promotion in his job and as well as reputation in his professional life. He buys Kamala for just two hundred and fifty rupees and insinuates to prove the veracity of such auctions taking place. But he himself becomes accused and that is the irony of his ideology. He should have gone there and taken a risk of relieving the adivasi women. Rather he argues with his wife, Sarita, that if such auctions were not there, how could the red light districts operate? So, Tendulkar wants to portray the savageness of human beings under the mask of their civilized attitude. Jai singh himself enjoys a bath after a tiresome journey but does not allow Kamala to cleanse, so as not to minimize the effect of his sensational report at the press-conference. His enthusiasm is directed towards sheer sensationalism and makes Kamala a laughing stock among various people, exposing her to their vulgar questions. And after his work is complete, he discards and dispatches her to an orphanage. Similarly, he exploits Sarita, his wife on various counts. Arundhati Banerjee aptly alludes, “Like Kamala, Sarita’s also an object in Jadhav’s life object that provides physical enjoyment, social companionship and domestic comfort” (XVII).

Slavery is a powerful motif in the play. Kamala, Sarita, Kamala Bai and even Jai Singh epitomize the different paradigms of slavery and subjugation. So man either is a slave to others or an oppressor; he is either submissive or aggressive. The things like struggle for power, suppression and submission which were prevalent in primitive man’s life, continue even today in civilized man’s life.
Kanyadaan, is also one of the most controversial plays of Vijay Tendulkar. It is the psychological study of the social tensions caused by casteism in India through the personae of Jyoti, who from a soft-spoken Brahmin girl, turns into a hardened wife of her dalit husband, Arun. Jyoti’s father Mr. Nath turns out to be a disillusioned realist from a stubborn idealist. The title itself suggests the theme of matrimonial relationship. Jyoti is a highly cultured Brahmin girl, wants to marry Arun Athawale, a young dalit poet. Her mother and brother warn her against the aftermath of marriage. But her father Mr. Nath, who rides the dreams of a casteless society, believes that society can not be transformed only through words. Finally, the consummation takes place, Arun, however, remains conscious of his lower class and hurls inhumane cruelties on Jyoti. With these atrocities, Arun seeks a kind of revenge on the Brahmins for having humiliated and exploited his ancestors for centuries. All efforts of mother and brother to rescue Jyoti are futile. Mr. Nath cogitates of humanitarian and egalitarian society, where human beings are treated as human beings and not as animals. However, Nath, later on, realises the hollowness of his idealism. Now he begins to understand the fact that name and position in society do not bring any change in the brutal treatment of a man towards his wife.

Tendulkar left the play as open-ended and hence the audiences are left to ponder over what happens to the daughter’s prospects of married life and the father’s idealistic fervour in the days to come. The play ends with Jyoti’s accusation of her father that it is he who has made her mentally crippled. Jyoti becomes the object of the audience’s sympathy but Arun that of antipathy. Thus, all the characters in Tendulkar’s plays are victims either of their inherent evil nature or of hostile circumstances - some of them become harsh, crude and frustrated due to bitter experiences and the tender-hearted characters suffer miseries calmly and quietly. Shailaja B. Wadikar aptly remarks, “One may see that the characters are to use the
existentialist jargon, ‘Condemned to be free’ while they are facing their entrapment or predicament” (67).

Vijay Tendulkar in his treatment of social issues exposes the layers of those elements that lead to the mechanization of power. Then the play A Friend’s Story (1981) (Mitrachi Goshta) deals with the theme of lesbianism. This play was translated by Gowri Ramnarayan and it is the first dramatic representation of taboo relationship in the realm of Indian English drama. It was performed at Rangayan, Thane, Maharashtra in 1981. Mitra is the pivotal character who is endowed with a masculine personality. She is also victim of physical harmonal imbalance. She is conscious of the fact that she is distinct from other girls and having a stubborn nature like that of a boy – always following her instincts. Tendulkar depicts the friendship between Mitra and Bapu that remains unique throughout. Bapu plays a more vital role in Mitra’s life than that of her parents. Throughout the play, Bapu has a close intimacy only with Mitra. Rohini Hattangady, who plays Mitra’s role, is quite justified in saying, “She (Mitra) cannot forget Bapu because Bapu was her ‘Mother’. She opened her heart to Bapu which she had not done even with her mother” (594). Mitra suffers a lot due to her deformity, Bapu, however, endeavours to help her recover and change her way of life. Mitra loves a girl named Nama and cannot live without her. Manya Dalvi, her rival in Nama’s affair creates a violent storm in Mitra’s life. On the other hand, Nama also goes an escapist way. When Mitra is rusticated from the college, no body accepts her and gives her emotional support. She is thrown out of her house to take shelter in women’s hostel. The play ends pathetically with Mitra’s suicide.

So the sad story of Mitra throws light on the indifferent attitude and total apathy shown towards her by her own near and dear ones and also by society at large. It is through the projection of these female characters that Tendulkar exposes the vices and breakdowns of society. Women are often projected as exploited and losers. For this reason, critics Satya Saran and
Vimal Patil asked a question in an interview with Tendulkar charging him with anti-woman bias and Tendulkar cryptically replied:

When I show the struggle of a woman, it is not one woman’s fight. The individual must have name and identity and caste and background to be credible, but she is not just a woman on stage, in a particular play. I am, in writing of her situation, showing that the possibility of a struggle against it exists … By not giving a solution, I leave possibilities open, for whatever course the change may take. When the members of my audience go home and chew on the situation, they might be able to see their daughter or sister in the woman’s position and come up with a way of changing the situation for her advantage. (40)

Against the charge that his writing, in general, suggests a pessimistic view of life, his answer was:

My experience of my times, my life has shown me that the individual is largely disempowered, made object, reduced to the role of spectator by the logic of certain events and social groupings… The history of human culture has taken very complex twists and turns. Yet, even today, my inspirational strength lies in the hope with which I look forward to tomorrow. I have consistently depicted the indomitability and the grit of the human spirit in my writings. But I have never allowed that to lead me into drawing unreal, comforting conclusions. (Vijay Tendulkar 79)

The playwright’s commitment to uphold human values can be clearly perceived in the portrayal of characters and incidents in his plays. He shows that society is divided on the basis of gender, class, caste etc.
Inequality, corruption, and violence characterize it. The life which is projected in the plays is miserable and full of contradictions. Tendulkar’s central characters are angry, sensitive and frustrated people like us. Their temperament perturbs audience and gives them a jerk so that they can come out of their unconsciousness. This way, Tendulkar makes them introspect for themselves and thereby broaden their sensibility and sharpen their vision to understand the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of human life.

*Encounter in Umbugland* (1974) is a political allegory through which Tendulkar presents the political situation of India in late sixties. After the death of the king, Vichitravirya, there was a political crisis in the state because there was lack of unanimous decision among the five ministers on the issue of the succession to the crown. So they decided to give this crown to Princess Vijaya, who was weak, feeble and ignorant. They did so because they all wanted to use her like a puppet queen. However, with the support of her attendant, Prannarayan, she learnt the subtle nuances and tricks of politics. She made direct interaction with people which enhanced her reputation in the public. She wanted to uplift the status of Kadamba tribe but all the ministers polarized against her decision. She, however, was determined to go against them with her commitment. Cabinet ministers tried to unleash a rebellion but she turned the tables very bravely and faced the mob squarely. This way Tendulkar successfully uses the theatre to induce a reawakening among the masses and to save the interest of humanity against the conventions. Through Vijaya’s success, Tendulkar not only pays tribute to the traits of femininity but also presents a challenge to the orthodoxy of social order. The combination of social idealism and sensationalism of theatre substantiates Tendulkar’s position as an enlightened postmodern Indian dramatist.

Commenting on the existential aspect of Tendulkar’s plays Shailaja Wadikar opines:
The existential tendencies are clearly noticed in almost all the plays…Miss Benare’s crazy words—“Life is something like nothingness”(116)—best illustrate “nothingness of our existence” in Sartrean sense; the egoistic Sakharam who is not ready to tie himself in any bond of matrimony becomes totally helpless towards the end of the play; the life of all the members of Pitale’s family exhibits that human life starts and ends in nothingness; Jai Singh’s frantic efforts to get a name and money by exposing the inhuman flesh market in the play Kamala prove futile; Ghashiram gets nothing even after the fulfillment of his ambition; Nath Devalalikar himself creates a hell for his daughter in his attempt to transform the ideal into the real…The protagonists of the plays live a kind of meaningless, purposeless life, but are free to make their choice. (55-56)

As a renowned writer of realistic drama, Tendulkar electrifies the audience with his brutal themes and forthright dialogues. He observes the social, political, cultural and moral degeneration of contemporary society and presents these issues in his plays thoroughly by remaining objective. His plays deal with the themes of love, sex, marriage, violence, gender bias, social inequality, power politics, alienation and isolation. He attempts to explore the depths and complexities of human life by delineating hypocrisy, promiscuity and emptiness of value systems which are there in traditional Indian middle-class society. For all these depictions, he uses techniques of satire, irony, pathos and mock-element. Tendulkar portrays physical sufferings along with mental agonies which come out of man’s conflict with the hostile surroundings. He is not only concerned with the confrontation between the society and the individual but also modern man’s total failure with himself and with others in the society. Tendulkar to Gowri Ramnarayan says:
Man is a complex phenomenon; any attempt at simplification through generalization would be foolish. I fear it also falsifies the picture. I wouldn’t do that. It’s an obsession with me to capture human behaviour, elusive and ever changing. At every stage, what I perceived has been reflected in my work. It’s not that I am writing now on a conclusion reached long ago. (*Frontline* 111)

Tendulkar’s approach to life is quite affirmative and his untiring commitment to human values can easily be seen in all his plays. The proposed research envisages investigating the author’s commitment to uphold the piety and ubiquity of social canons. The study, it is presumed, will enable to have a peep into the socio-political fabric as embedded into the plays of Vijay Tendulkar.
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