Chapter-5
Aestheticization of Violence

The immense popularity of Tendulkar’s plays among theatre goers, readers and critics amply proves that he has been successful in dealing with the reality of violence in a highly fascinating and thought-provoking manner. The fact that his plays, as works of art, have stood the test of time on the stage is further testified by the acclaim they have received from spectators and drama critics, not only from India, but also from other parts of the world. The secret of their universal appeal, it seems, lies not only in the choice of violence as his major theme, but also in the way he has aestheticized even the most brutal and gruesome of human actions, experiences and situations. His recognition as a playwright of all times and cultures is mainly due to his dexterous and incisive rendering of not only the visible but also the subterranean and even primitive levels of violence in the human world in a highly skillful and hypnotizing manner. An analysis of all those features which make his plays so gripping, therefore, becomes necessary in order to arrive at a fair appreciation of his mind and art.

His readers feel impelled to seek answers to a number of questions about all those aspects of his style and technique which keep them spellbound. Questions about his art of characterization and structure, language and imagery, organization of events and situations, and, above all, a seamless integration of all the different parts and elements into a single whole producing unified effect, exercise the minds of his critics. An enquiry into the way he blends the native and western traditions can further add to an understanding of the sources that enrich his art of drama.

One of the most important secrets of readers’ perennial interest in his theatre, it seems, is his ability to probe into and dramatize the stark realities of human nature and society in a brutally bold and honest manner. Tendulkar believes that man is primarily an animal and “culture and other factors affect us but only superficially.”¹ That is why many of his characters exhibit strong tendencies to inflict pain, torture and violence on others. As a result of this, central events and incidents in his plays tend to emanate from the behaviours and personalities of his characters, dominated primarily by their innate tendency to savagery.

This gives to his characters a central place in his scheme of things, a place more important than that of plot, moral message or ideology. Tendulkar himself asserted in one of his
lectures: “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.” These characters as “living persons,” he further adds, led him “into the thick of their lives” where they would give him the theme. It suggests that it is the characters who carry the plots and meanings of his play, serving as a kind of backbone to their structures.

For example, plays like *Sakharam Binder*, *Kanyadaan* and *A Friend’s Story* are built around a central character, male or female. Sakharam, the eponymous character, is based on a real man Tendulkar had actually heard about and who had possessed his imagination until he grew and became into a living, breathing character in this play. He emerges as a powerful figure who determines the whole action and events, dominating all the other characters, the mood, tone and atmosphere of the play. It is he who sets the entire action of the play into motion through his propensities and predilections, choosing and dealing with his women at his own peculiar terms, causing the sequence of incidents which move towards crisis and then dramatic reversal, marking the end of the play. All the other characters derive their significance in the scheme of the play from the relationship Sakharam has with them. All through the play, he remains the focal point for his women, whose strengths and weaknesses of personalities come into play in negotiating his masculine self. They, thus, also serve as means of exploring, projecting and explaining the depths and intricacies of Sakharam’s mind and milieu.

One notices that characters, other than the central ones, also tend to come and play their roles in accordance with the logic of the play. Nowhere do they seem to have been forced into the scheme of the work. Talking of Champa in *Sakharam Binder*, the playwright asserts that he “did not know who would be the second woman in his life till Champa entered the play. She had to have a husband and her husband entered after her, looking for her. Champa was not thrown out by her husband like the first woman Laxmi; she on her own had walked out on him.” Champa appears as a stubborn woman with tendencies to assert her freedom rather aggressively. These traits of her temperament and attitude decide her relationship with Sakharam and thus influence the course of events in the play. Her violent clash with strong headed and egotistical Sakharam and its catastrophic consequences, therefore, appear to be perfectly natural.

The place and role of Laxmi, too, appear to be equally in tune with the internal logic of the play. In contrast to Champa, she appears as a traditional woman, behaving in every situation in accordance with this dominant feature of her being. All her strengths and weaknesses flow
naturally from this adherence to the traditional definition of wifehood and womanhood. That is why, as against Champa, she evinces an attitude of worship for her husband, even when he has thrown her out of the house. Again, she remains faithful to Sakharam, whom she accepts as her husband for giving her shelter, food and clothing. Her complaint to Sakharam that Champa is cheating on him by going to Dawood, too, reflects, in a way, her faithfulness to him and to the ideals of wifehood. When Champa drops dead in an inebriated condition at the hands of Sakharam in a fit of rage, she stands by him firmly, exhibiting remarkable courage and confidence derived only from her faith in the powers of her own devoted and honest wifehood.

All these characters in the play tend to carry conviction with us mainly because all that they say and do perfectly coheres with their own fundamental, moral, emotional and mental fibers and also at the same time seamlessly fit into the design and direction of the play. This makes Tendulkar’s characters and actions on the stage look aesthetically convincing and, therefore, delightful to the sensibility of his readers and spectators.

Similarly, the entire plot of *Silence! The Court is in Session* revolves around the life and personality of the character, Benare, who remains at the heart of the action and incidents that take place or are reported during the course of its run on the stage. It is through her that we get all the information about characters like Kashikars, Ponkshe, Sukhatme, Karnik and Rokde with their failures and frustrations. She is the one who is the victim of the exploitative lust of men like Prof. Damle. Again, it is Benare who is persecuted and baited for her pregnancy out of wedlock by these frustrated, hypocritical and self-appointed custodians of social morality. All the events and incidents in the play, thus, have their relevance mainly with reference to her character. All the other men and women also exist in relation to Benare. Their role is mainly to offer a foil through their egotism, sadism and weaknesses, typical of those who are the products of patriarchy, to the emerging new woman who is stronger, more independent, humane and vibrant. Though Benare is certainly the pivotal figure in the play, but, unlike Sakharam, she was conceived and created by Tendulkar in order to expose the “repressed violence… in the pious looking middle class man.”

Through the victimization of a woman, Tendulkar “reflects the post industrial instinct of herding together to hunt down a quarry.” This “terrible psychological violence under the surface” is dramatized through a number of male characters, joined by a woman, Mrs. Kashikar, indicating how women of this class too rejoice in adding to the miseries of their own kind.
All of them appear as peculiar products of the man-made cultural milieu, obsessed with middle class consciousness of social respectability. Economic career and social status are their only dreams and ambitions. They all suffer from acute pains of punctured pride, caused by their failures to live the image of manhood. Boastful claims and affectations of prestige reveal their desperate attempts at finding relief from the agony of battered ego. They all give vent to their accumulated frustrations and resultant anger against a woman whom they find vulnerable and an easy target for their sadistic venture. They resemble each other in pattern of their behavior, social background and outlook so closely that they tend to live in our minds and memories as members of the same clan, representing middle class pretensions of success and morality. This makes these characters representatives of an idea and an attitude typical of a class or group, making them look more like type figures than well individuated entities.

They, thus, serve as a kind of a backcloth against which the distinctive identity of Benare as an individual shines more strikingly, compelling both sympathy and admiration of the reader. If these characters appear to reflect more the idea they stand for, instead of their own finely delineated individualities, Benare fascinates with her natural human complexity and originality. This is further indicated by the fact that Benare reveals an intricate interplay of contraries in her personality making her such an authentic portrayal of newly emerging modern Indian woman who “finds it intolerable when she is not recognized as an individual.” That is why, it is she who appears as the main source of suspense and curiosity, keeping us guessing about her responses to the unfolding aspects of her situation. Tendulkar seems to employ frequently this strategy of placing his more humane and complex characters with inherent potentials of development in the midst of those who are relatively simpler and static figures, representing a world of lopsided existence. This he does not only to portray realities of modern life but also to explore and dramatize for us the possibilities of divergent perceptions and attitudes with their inherent strengths and limitations. This also lends to the aesthetic power of the dramatic conflict and tension, so vital to sustain the interest and excitement of the reader and the spectator. His Kamala appears to have this device as central to the organization of its theme, incidents and characters.

The atmosphere of the play is charged with elements of cruelty, torture, anger and apprehensions. The experience of being emotionally hurt and humiliated in different forms and degrees is encountered by almost all the major characters. Like most of his other plays, it is the dehumanization of urban middle class, obsessed with material progress, which is at the heart of
the crisis energizing the whole play. Once again, the whole issue is presented as something rooted in changing human values of modern times and is projected through well delineated characters, representing different aspects of and perspectives on the problem.

Jaisingh, for instance, epitomizes the ethos of ruthless competition and pursuit of self-interest with total indifference to the sensitivities and expectations of others. His investigative journalism, aimed at nothing but progress in career, represents modern man’s reckless race to win fame and status overnight. All his actions, words, gestures, thoughts and attitudes indicate that the writer has sought to create in him not as much an individual as a figure projecting the coarsened, vulgarized and brutalized modern cultural milieu in general. He, in fact, becomes undistinguishable from the idea of modern life as mechanically materialistic resulting in fragmentation of relationships. Through him, Tendulkar, it seems, has highlighted how life, bereft of finer human values, gets reduced to an episode full of sound and fury, ultimately, signifying nothing.

His characterization, however, shows how well Tendulkar develops his plots and themes around his powerfully depicted characters. The play suggests the irresistible appeal of the glittering world of success to modern man who feels highly impressed by the drive, ambition and single mindedness of their so-called heroes. But Tendulkar exposes the paradox of this culture when he, through Jaisingh’s character, shows that the appearance of this seductive world of success conceals in it nothing but hollowness, frustrations and death of genuine human values. The qualities that make the representatives of this society initially strong and fascinating, ultimately, turn out to be their fatal flaw and thus the cause of their pathetic fall.

Tendulkar’s ironical treatment of such persons is evident from the way he shows how Jaisingh, with the singular pursuit of his lopsided vision of life, gets reduced to an almost one-dimensional figure. He appears more as a type figure, like Kashikar and his group in Silence! The Court is in Session, than as an individual capable of change in his outlook and conduct. Such static figures fail to spring dramatic surprises on us with expressions or revelations of their hidden capacities in the face of new situations.

Like Jaisingh, Kamala, too, appears as a flat and one-dimensional character, evincing no signs of potentials for growth. She enters the stage as a dumb-founded, ignorant and passive woman, bought from the market and exits like a slave conveniently disposed of by the master. Though, she does arouse our pity for her exploitation and commodification, she fails to impress
because she remains, all through the play, passive, a mere object to be handled by Jaisingh the way he wants. The characterization of both Kamala and Jaisingh, thus, shows that they have been presented by Tendulkar critically hinting at his rejection of all those approaches to life which are simplistic, lopsided and reductive. He, in fact, seems to underline the value and viability of a more comprehensive view and vision of life, aided by a realistic approach, which he dramatizes through the subtly portrayed character of Sarita in this play.

She emerges as, perhaps, the most important figure, central to the structure and the meaning of the play. We find her almost always present on the stage, contributing to the development of the action, theme and other characters. It is around her that the conflict between characters, ideas, attitudes and values is built and our interest in the dramatic action is fully sustained. She is both a representative figure as well as a dexterously drawn individual with distinctive qualities of mind, heart and action. We see in her a woman who is respectful to the tradition of Indian wifehood and yet is on her way to a life of individual freedom and dignity. The clash between old and new and the tensions characteristic of the phase of social and cultural transition get crystallized through her role. Her hold on our heart and mind, in fact, grows stronger as the action around her unfolds. The success of the play lies in the manner Tendulkar has brought to life such a large number of warring human impulses and passions through her portrayal. She has been delineated from inside out, evincing Tendulkar’s profound understanding of human psyche and his ability to render it in a highly skillful manner. She is the one whose latent capacities get awakened and actualized in the form of real decisions and actions in the process of her encounters with changing situations. This subtle interplay of her subjective potentials and outer realities makes development in her personality look so real.

Her delineation becomes all the more convincing because she appears to be fully consistent with the social background she comes from. She belongs to an Indian middle class educated family with its consciousness of national and social values, characteristic of the period just before and after independence. True to this background, she appears in the first act of the play as a traditional wife, dutifully discharging all her responsibilities. The way she sides with Jaisingh for his fast pace journalism when criticized by Kakasaheb and her compliance with the expectations, instructions and desires of her husband only reveal how well she represents the middle class feminine ethos. Cast in this mould, she plays her role of a housewife with some feelings of a secure routine life with a kind of faith in her husband. But, as an educated modern
woman, her simmering discontent with the way things are in and around the family can also be felt just beneath the surface. Her silent looks of unease, embarrassment, fear and even being shocked at the way she is ignored with indifference or is snubbed by Jaisingh at a number of places in this act conveys clearly the suppressed resentment of an educated woman with expectations of a better and more understanding behavior from her husband.

The second act depicts her growing unease and resentment which soon begins to take the form of disillusionment and even anger. When she learns from Jaisingh and Jain about how Kamala was displayed by her husband and made fun of by others in the press conference, she tacitly joins Kakasaheb in the disapproval of the whole incident. The way she springs to her feet to leave the discussion is a clear gesture of her protest against the treatment meted out to a woman, Kamala. Her growing sense of identification with the plight of women as mere commodities for the fun and pleasure of men surfaces unambiguously when she, even while trying to keep control over herself, refuses to go to bed with Jaisingh. The question of Kamala as to how much Jaisingh paid to buy her (Sarita), comes as a final blow to her sense of dignity and compromise. She feels violently yanked out into a realization of the stark and harsh truth about woman’s diminution and degradation at the hands of man. All this reveals subtly the increasing awareness of her identity and the urge to assert her individuality. This pattern of change appears to be so smooth and spontaneous that her revolt against Jaisingh seems to be a perfectly natural consequence of her fundamental personality and socio-educational context. Tendulkar’s art in showing how and why one behaves in the way one does in a particular context is something that fascinates his readers and spectators. Sarita’s revolt, therefore, is an evidence of how well-proportioned and organically related are the markers in the growth of her character depicted in a cause and effect relationship with people and the milieu around her.

Another factor which sutures us with his characters, and thus their world, is the human complexity, accommodating sometimes, the contraries in their impulses, attitudes and behaviors. This is why his men and women defy reductive straight-jacketed frames of definitions even when they appear to be simple characters. It is a bit surprising that this aspect of his art has sometimes eluded the appreciative attention of his critics. For example, critics like Vikram Gokhale, feel baffled by what he sees as certain unresolved contradictions in his characters. He sees in the depiction of Kakasaheb a contradiction, “a gap between his words and deeds.” He goes on to allege that Kakasaheb comments on Jaisingh’s “rude behavior with his wife” on the one hand,
and on the other “tells Sarita a thing or two”\textsuperscript{10} about his own married life. The critic here, it seems, has not been able to acknowledge Kakasaheb’s moral courage, honest self-criticism and the change in his own attitudes with experience – the qualities which consistently distinguish him from other characters in the play.

Catherine Thankamma, too, perhaps taking lead from Gokhale, brings similar charges against Kakasaheb when she observes that “uncle Kakasaheb who first sympathizes with Sarita and is critical of Jaisingh ends up telling her that men are like that, and that her place is beside her husband.”\textsuperscript{11} She concludes that “in a subversive way he is ensuring the continuance of the status quo….”\textsuperscript{12}

Again, one finds that Catherine has not placed his words of advice to Sarita in relation to Kakasaheb’s overall personality as an experienced, mature and wise old man who is against all forms of extremities. It is noticeable that she ignores how he feels “fascinated and impressed by the quiet determination,” in Sarita’s words when she firmly tells Kakasaheb that “I’ll go on feeling it …. A day will come, Kakasaheb, when I will stop being a slave. I’ll do what I wish, and no one will rule over me. That day has to come. And I’ll pay whatever price I have to pay for it” (\textit{K}:52).

Tendulkar’s portrayal of Kakasaheb, like others in the play, in fact, impresses us because he has been rendered as an integrated personality, fully consistent with the expectations he arouses in the reader and the spectator right from the beginning of the play. His words and actions become all the more convincing as they reveal him as a man fully in consonance with his social, cultural and historical background. That is why, characters in this play have strongly fascinated his spectators, mirroring aspects of their own realities overt or covert. Feelings of shock, astonishment, anger, contempt, compassion and surprise in varying shades and nuances which they spring on us during the course of the action testify how closely we tend to see something of ourselves in them.

The power of Tendulkar’s art also lies in his ability as an artist to provoke us into thinking about the issues, characters and attitudes dealt with in his plays. He, thus, not only leads us to participate emotionally in the lives of his characters but also to subject them to an objective and critical gaze. This provides exciting probes into various dimensions of conflicts, “arousing empathy and identification in the audience.”\textsuperscript{13} This element of conflict gets manifested particularly by the assertion of the will, conscious or unconscious, of a character against
antagonistic situations or forces. It generally implies a struggle of the individual “against fatality, against social law, against one of his fellow mortals, against himself if need be, against the ambitions, the interests, the prejudices, the folly, the malevolence of those around him.” Drama in fact arises from conflict, is sustained by it and comes to an end when the reaction of an individual against obstructive circumstances, fortunes or even the will of others relaxes or ceases.

Like all other great works of drama, Tendulkar’s plays too are replete with the element of conflict which is the main source of suspense for the audience. Its manifestations, ranging from aggressive and violent actions and expressions to tensions and discontents simmering just beneath the surface, immensely energize the events in the play and also impart vigour and distinctness to his characters. It also makes his plays inclusive in their content by depicting the clash of contraries as something integral to the realities of life – individual, familial and social. Tendulkar as a playwright with considerable depth and complexity depicts conflict not only in its overt and obvious forms of expression, but very often in its subtle and intricate workings, straddling through all the different areas and aspects of life. This enlists our involvement in the play at the levels of its story, theme and characters.

One of the most striking forms of conflict in his plays is visible in the area of relationships. Obviously, the relationship between man and woman is of pivotal importance in human life and society. The treatment of this conflict in his plays, therefore, assumes a great significance. That is why, one of the primary dimensions of clash and tensions in human relationship explored for us by Tendulkar is between man and woman. In this respect his plays like Kamala and Sakharam Binder appear to provide a very absorbing and interesting study. The distinctive qualities of characters in Kamala get crystallized through a persistent pattern of opposition between Jaisingh and his other fellow journalist on the one hand and Sarita and Kamala on the other. Tendulkar through them dramatizes the conflicting nature of this relationship and depicts it against the wider backdrop of social and cultural milieu. He reveals through Jaisingh, the typical male chauvinism, aggressive, self-seeking and dominating towards woman. The objectification or othering of woman by man, regarding himself as the supreme subject, is suggested to be the cause of collision between the two sexes. Woman, like Sarita, endowed with her own sensitivity, intelligence, will and desires as a human being has to assert her identity and dignity, resulting in clash between husband and wife. If Jaisingh seeks to
appropriate Sarita’s identity as a woman, reducing her to a status of a thing for the realization of his own desires and goals, Sarita fights back to regain and actualize herself through a life of her own choice.

This conflict between Sarita and Jaisingh, husband and wife in the family, is presented as a kind of microcosm of the macro-social world, constructed and governed by man. The binary and hierarchical relationships, placing woman in an inferior and secondary place to man, is common to all patriarchal societies like ours. It is this oppressive system, the source of psychological violence in the play, which is the cause of conflict between Sarita, the individual and the social laws of patriarchal set up. This conflict between the individual and society, as witnessed in most of his plays, is an important theme of realistic drama produced by such playwrights as Ibsen, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. The secret of its appeal to our hearts and minds lies in the fact that it looks so real, as if it is a part of our own immediate world. In the words of Shaw, which he used for Ibsen, Tendulkar too, “gives us not only ourselves, but ourselves in our own situations. The things that happen to his stage figures are things that happen to us.”

Such characters look like us all the more when we find them caught up in not only the external tensions but inner conflicts as well. This happens particularly when the individual finds the relations and society as antagonistic to his interest, quests and sense of identity. The thwarting situations trigger a conflict within the character between opposing impulses, passions, ideas and attitudes, thus imparting depths and complexity to the internal drama of his life.

Sarita’s character attracts us powerfully because of the contraries which push and pull her in opposing directions. If the values that she has imbibed from her parents and the middle class milieu impel her to serve her husband like a smiling, compliant, obedient, self-effacing, traditional wife, her consciousness of self and her knowledge of right and wrong as a young educated modern woman motivate and ultimately force her to revolt against the injustice and indignities heaped upon her in particular and women in general in the power crazy world of crass materialism. Thus, it will not be out of place to describe the element of conflict in this play, borrowing Nicoll’s words for the Elizabethan drama, as “an inner struggle moving alongside of an outer conflict, the one mingling with the other…” both contributing to the development of the play. The dynamics of development of both the plot and the protagonist lies in this subtle
handling of organically related movements of streams of conflict flowing together, intersecting and contributing to each other, unifying the play into an artistic hole.

This inextricable mingling of various types of conflicts makes his plays like *Silence! The Court is in Session* so outstanding in its aesthetic effects. Benare keeps us enthralled with the conflict to be or not to be, that rages within her all along and which is not only caused but also escalated and complicated by antagonistic social forces. Her seduction and betrayal by men, not once but twice, makes her both love and hate her body intensely: “I despise this body – and I love it! I hate it – but – it’s all you have in the end, where will it go without you? And where will you go if you reject it?” (*SCS*:118). By pitting an emotional and sensitive individual, pulsating with life, against the impersonal, mechanical and sadistic world of “cultured men of the twentieth century” whose “lips are full of lovely worn out phrases! And their bellies are full of unsatisfied desires,” (*SCS*:117) Tendulkar weaves the individual conflict into the social and the relational ones, creating such a coherent and cogent story of the drama that keeps us spellbound. The play keeps agitating us also with the conflict it displays between superego and the sub-conscious of the middle class hypocritical man on the one hand and on the other, Benare’s vitality of Eros and its repression by the forces of death, masking as social morality.

Tendulkar, in *Sakharam Binder*, foregrounds violence both as the cause and consequence of a life - external and internal - torn by conflicts at different levels. As soon as the curtain rises, what strikes us strongly is a man, Sakharam, roaring at children, followed at heels by a woman, who is “trembling with fright” (*SB*:125). It immediately introduces us to the battle between Sakharam as an individual with his private life and the outer world represented by children in the streets. The tension between the man and the woman as well as unease and dissonance within their minds and psyche impact us with such a force that we instantaneously get hooked on the play.

Sakharam’s anger, violent actions and words in the play reveal him in a kind of ceaseless war as a man with the opposite sex on the one hand, and the world of sham male morality around him on the other. It also, at the same time, exhibits an ongoing battle between his self-esteem, mutilated by feelings of being abused and rejected by parents in childhood, and his warped egotism, seeking to repair itself through aggressive self-assertions. In his unconscious attempt to reassure himself of his masculinity, he tries to subjugate women to his will, authority and virility, turning his relationship with them into a kind of veritable battlefield. His attitude and conduct,
however, reflect a sort of honesty and the guts “to do a thing openly”\textit{(SB:126)}. This again sets him in contrast and conflict, as an individual, with all those men of the social world who “slink out at night, on the sly. And they put on an act all the time”\textit{(SB:126)}. His character looks all the more attractive as a realistically rendered complex human being when we also find certain contradictions in his attitudes towards husband-wife relationship. He ridicules wives for their traditional worship of their husbands, but expects the same from them for himself. Again, he derides husbands for beating their wives, but does the same, most brutally, to all those whom he brings as his wives. Tendulkar shows varying facets of this character who has suffered because of many compulsive psychological factors and does not let him fall into a category of full villain. Thus, the audience fully sympathizes with Saktharam who is not completely dehumanized and exhibits a fine blend of contraries of emotions and behaviors. The playwright himself hints at this fascinating paradox in his character when he describes him as a “coarse but impressive personality”\textit{(SB:125)}. If he stands out as an uncouth, foul-mouthed and rough-mannered person, he is equally powerful and captivating in his aesthetic sensibility which is revealed when he plays on his mridanga. This man who appears to be intolerant of every opposition to his will and desires gets absorbed in a state of trance and produces thrilling mridanga beats. He is always ready to give a nasty time to any of his women who may try to boss over him and yet he shows signs of being receptive to Laxmi’s taming and refining influence. Even when he throws her out of his house he confesses to Dawood: “There have been many women here, but this one left a mark before she went away”\textit{(SB:153)}. This clearly shows how Tendulkar humanizes even those of his characters who shock our sensibility with their brutality and coarseness. The element of tension and suspense in the action of the play is further intensified by the conflict between the women characters like Champa and Laxmi on the one hand and the internal conflicts within their own psyche on the other. The clash between their consciousness of independent self and their surrender to man forced by circumstances makes them look like real women of our society. The battling attitudes, values and personalities they represent culminate ultimately in their ruthless struggle and competition against each other for their survival in the male world.

The analysis of conflict in Tendulkar’s plays shows that society is almost always present as an important character, antagonistic to the will and drives of his central figures. This social conflict lends to the play an added aesthetic power when the characters evince a consciousness of this antagonism between the coercive social laws of conduct on the one hand and their own
natural instincts and impulses seeking fulfillment on the other. The greater this awareness of the character the more intense, and therefore, more arresting is the conflict in the play. Though all of his plays have characters who exhibit a strong consciousness of the restrictive, unjust and oppressive social powers, Mitra, in A Friends Story, is the one whose life becomes so powerful and poignant because of her tormenting consciousness of the disparities and dissonance between her biological natural propensities and thwarting social censure.

All the conflicts and tensions in the play stem from the incompatibility of her strong lesbian inclinations with the traditional heterosexual laws of her society. She knows it fully well that society, patriarchal as it is, treats such girls as abnormal and therefore totally unacceptable. She is haunted all the time by the consciousness of violence inherent in the social prejudice against those who are different in sexual orientation. When she came of age rather early, but didn’t show girl-like inclinations the elders got worried and angry: “What will people say?” was the bugbear they set up to control her” but to her bewilderment and agony she found “‘that’ kind of relationship” (AFS:431) with men rather ‘bizarre’ and ‘weird’. Unable to comprehend it, she passes through tormenting moments of feeling “deficient in some way”(AFS:432). Desperate to assure herself of being like other girls, she even performs an experiment to have this kind of relationship with her servant. But the realization that “she could never become a man’s partner in this” (AFS:433) devastates all her hopes of being acceptable to her family and society. This torturous consciousness and fear of social reproof and rejection instilled by the family drives her to take the desperate step of attempting suicide.

Even when she survives this attempt at her own life, this conflict both, within and with her people, continues to harry her. Although she tries to muster up some courage to accept her truth and to live a life of her own inclinations, she has to encounter only scorn, censure and rejections from everyone. Even Nama, who shares her tendencies, betrays her because of the pressure and fears of social reprobation. Malevolence of people like Dalvi further intensifies the element of conflict in her life.

This hostility of Mitra, the individual, with the inimical social laws on the one hand and her irresistible libidinal urge with her superego on the other, besetting all her relations with tensions, appears to be the main force that energizes the whole play. All these different forms of conflict are so coherently integrated with each other that we remain riveted on all that takes place
on the stage to its very end. The suspense it generates never seems to flag or slacken in its hold on our hearts and minds.

Tendulkar’s plays, in this way, engage us at all the different levels of our experience – social, relational and personal. We feel involved with the action, characters, events and life represented in the play at our intellectual, moral, emotional and imaginative levels. He almost invariably confronts us with situations where the central character/characters are pitted against some systemic or cultural force, compelling us to react in different ways, and thus develop an understanding of socio-historical realities and their impact on human relations and behaviour.

In *Kanyadaan*, this conflict between the individual and society has been presented in its historic context. Our aesthetic appreciation of the play depends upon the awareness that the play and its important characters like Arun, Nath and Jyoti belong to the period of transition in Indian society from a state of centuries-old rigid caste stratification and discrimination to a more egalitarian outlook and set up. This process of change generates numerous forms of social, economic, political and cultural oppositions and tensions, influencing both the public and the private spheres of life. The play mirrors these caste and class conflicts along with the clash between ideals, ideologies, ambitions and prejudices in a bold and insightful manner. The opposition between the oppressor and the oppressed, public appearances and private truths, egotism and opportunism and ideals and actualities, constitute the very warp and woof of the theme of the play.

If Nath represents the caste of Brahmins, Arun is a scavenger by caste and represents the class of the Dalits. The discrimination and oppression of the lower castes condemning them to degraded and impoverished conditions of life at the hands of the upper castes, particularly the Brahmins, have been the historic facts of the Indian society since the times of Manu. But the social reform movements, Gandhian struggle against untouchability and the idealism of leaders in the immediate post-independence era opened opportunities of education and socio-economic amelioration for the class of the downtrodden. It awakened in them an acute sense of having being wronged, instigating feelings of rage against injustice and their marginalization. The haunting class consciousness, particularly among the newly educated young men of this segment of society, created certain dichotomies in their behaviors which the play reveals through the character of Arun.
His obsession with the miseries and indignities suffered by his caste in the past makes him a conflict-ridden personality caught up in the throes of opposing pressures of impulses and thoughts. He is sentimentally attached to his caste identity and the history of its woes on the one hand and on the other, has an urge, perhaps unconscious, to have relations with the upper caste and class by marrying Jyoti, a Brahmin girl. He seeks endorsement and praise of himself and his book, ironically, from Nath Devlalikar, a man of the caste he viscerally hates for its “unwrinkled Tinopal world” and “wheat bread culture” (KD:513). He is fiercely angry about the injustice which his people were subjected to and yet he often appears to wallow in the horrendous details of their conditions. Contradictions between the consciousness of his public image projected through his autobiography and the brutal man of real life behavior as he is further reveal his divided self. He, at times, appears as a man of tenderness and love for Jyoti, his wife, but also, and very often a cruel sadist, who beats her black and blue. In the words of Jyoti, “Arun is both the beast and the lover. Arun is the demon, and also the poet” (KD:566). There is a striking contrast between his loud and violent protest against caste injustice and prejudice on the one hand and the atrocities and injustice he callously perpetrates on high class women like Jyoti on the other. The way Tendulkar exposes these inner conflicts in the character of Arun, placing him in socio-historic context, testifies the playwright’s total honesty as an artist in dealing with this delicate and sensitive social reality.

Conflicting with the attitude and personality of Arun is the character of Nath Devlalikar along with the members of his family. Both Arun and Nath represent two different castes with opposing social and historical backgrounds. As in the case of Arun, obsession with caste seems to be a major determining factor in Nath’s approach to social realities of his time. If Arun is a dramatization of a victim’s psyche, Nath represents the consciousness of a victimizer, carrying the guilt of having betrayed the Dalits for generations. Like Arun, therefore, he too appears caught up in a whirlpool of conflicts both external as well as internal. We find in him a romantic idealist at war with the world of reality. As the repairer of the world with his utopian vision of post-independence India, he finds himself completely out of steps with his times. His dreams of establishing overnight a classless and casteless society violently clash with the facts of history, human nature and the all important issues of social and economic power.

This conflict between ideas and actualities, ideals and hard realities sparks of clashes and tensions in his relations with others too. There is an ongoing battle between his rigid
commitment to theoretical and visionary views on the one hand and the practical and rational approach of his wife and son on the other. This also puts him at odds with his daughter, Jyoti and her husband, Arun for whom, ironically, he ultimately stoops to make compromises. Furthermore, when he finds Jyoti brutally oppressed by Arun because of her being a kind of guinea pig in his experiment of socialist ideals, he feels torn apart between the social visionary and the feeling father in him.

In these multidimensional conflicts triggered by class and caste consciousness, Jyoti appears as a kind of scapegoat. She is the victim of both, Nath’s idealism and Arun’s rage and hatred. She is brought up mentally on romantic ideas of fundamental nobility of man, but has to live as a wife with a man who treats her savagely. She grew up believing naively in the possibility of transforming society completely, but feels totally disillusioned when confronted with the intransigence in basic human nature. The conflict between abstract dreams and bitter truth of practical real world finds a powerful expression through Jyoti’s role in the play. What distinguishes Jyoti from both Nath and Arun is the fact that it is she alone who appears to resolve her conflicts and emerge as a realistically drawn human character displaying a convincing pattern of change in consonance with her basic moral fiber, background, realities of her society and human nature.

While reading and watching Tendulkar’s plays, we feel that the dimensions of conflicts and tensions depicted by him reverberate in our own instincts and impulses, thoughts, ideas and ideals and consciousness of various issues, besetting life around us. This may be attributed to his dramatization of different aspects of our life in a relationship of close interdependence. He shows personal and familial life in close connection with the social milieu, underlying how deeply they are impacted by each other. Besides such issues as social and sexual morality, identity and status of women, individual propensities and social laws, caste and class, he has also delineated the struggle for power as one of the forceful factors instigating violence and conflict not only in the corridors of politics but also between social groups, communities, persons and also within the minds and psyche of individuals. The treatment of politics as one of the major areas of conflict, causing tensions and clashes in other spheres of social and individual life, is noticeable prominently in his plays Ghashiram Kotwal and Encounter in Umbugland.

The very title of the play Encounter in Umbugland suggests confrontation between opposing forces, persons and ambitions for power. At first look, it appears to be between
Princess Vijaya and the Ministers but it is seen percolating down to the common man resulting in regional, tribal and class conflicts. If Vijaya seeks to establish herself as unquestioned Queen with unbridled authority, the group of Ministers tries to thwart her efforts through their machinations. The Ministers are also divided against each other as each one of them is out to beat the other in this game for power. Conflicts of interests whip up even violent clashes and the brutal face of power-grabbing monster in humans gets manifested in bloody encounters.

If *Encounter in Umbugland* is a rather obvious allegory of conflict for political power, *Ghashiram Kotwal* reveals this phenomenon in its wider forms, intricacies and subtleties giving rise to lasting and deeper reverberations in us. It reveals insightfully some of the facts of modern Indian politics with the help of some events and situations recorded in Maratha history. The historical facts of conflict between the Marathas and the Brahmins in the later part of the 18th century provides a backdrop to the drama set in Pune, which was ruled by the Brahmins. The Machiavellian move by Nana of controlling the Brahmins of Poona by using a north-Indian Brahmin, Ghashiram from Kanauj, hints at the subterranean divide between poonaites and the northerners, giving a new dimension to this game of power. Ghashiram’s ruthless repression and terror is the result of his ego, wounded by humiliation at the hands of Poona Brahmins who call him a ‘thief,’ a ‘scoundrel’ and a ‘monkey’. The clash of his injured pride with the self-conceitedness and insolence of the people of Poona provides the basic force that moves the plot and characters of the play.

The internal conflicts and tensions which a revengeful man with unbridled powers is most likely to experience as a consequence of his actions are dramatized so convincingly in the portrayal of Ghasiram that we tend to develop a human understanding of even the most devilish of his ways. We see in him a power crazy monster possessed by the unquenchable thirst for revenge on the one hand, and a man with a heart full of love for his daughter, Gauri, on the other. When he gives his daughter to Nana, “The beast,” in order to become Kotwal, he is pricked by his conscience that he has put “the child of his heart for sale”(*GK*:381). This tension between opposing impulses of a father’s love and concern for his daughter and madness for revenge makes his character complex and humanly realistic. When his daughter, the only humanizing factor in his life, dies, his fiendish rage and craving for blood is let loose. It is this which ultimately boomerangs on him and he is stoned mercilessly to death. *Ghashiram Kotwal*, like all of his other plays, is thus charged with an element of powerful suspense compelling us to ask
“what the conflict means to the character, how it affects their actions, their relationships and most importantly, what are the consequences.”\textsuperscript{17} In his plays, we see “characters in confrontation, in dynamic relationships that emphasize their differences and force them to transform.”\textsuperscript{18} The handling of dramatic conflict makes the plays of Tendulkar so powerful and arresting because it “pushes characters to express human qualities that reveal a deeper understanding of the story, ourselves and the world around us.”\textsuperscript{19} It shows that in his plays “events and characters are not isolated. They are related in some way or another to the world of ordinary life.”\textsuperscript{20} The characters pitted against their situations, society and even against themselves appear to be like ourselves, and this inner likeness is the source of the aesthetic effect of his plays. They seem to represent human nature so well that we tend to identify ourselves with them and make their misfortunes, tensions and sufferings our own.

The identification, arousing feeling of pity and fear, is the source of immense pleasure for his readers. In the words of Aristotle, “pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves.”\textsuperscript{21} Tendulkar has dramatized the misfortunes and unmerited suffering of his characters so well that we tend to feel pleasure of sympathy, of fellow feeling, of sympathetic emotion into which we are led by the art of the dramatist.

This is evident from the way we tend to identify ourselves with characters like Sarita and Kamala in \textit{Kamala}. We feel intensely with them the pain of their undeserved lot as women. If Kamala’s commodification and resultant humiliation as a woman arouses our fellow feelings as weak, helpless and exploited individuals, we feel with intensity the frustration, anger and the resolution of Sarita to revolt against degradation and oppression of women. Similarly, our identification with Benare in \textit{Silence! The Court is in Session}, Rama in \textit{Vultures}, Jyoti in \textit{Kanyadaan}, Laxmi and Champa in \textit{Sakharam Binder} and many other victims of their circumstances is so deep that we get carried away by irresistible feelings of sympathy. They appear to be so essentially like us that we shudder at the sights of their pains and sufferings. Our imaginative union with their life raises us out of ourselves and we feel one with these tragic sufferers and through them humanity at large.

Even those of his characters who appear to be brutal in their violence provide a peculiar kind of pleasure to the reader and spectator. We tend to see in them a reflection of those of our natural human instincts or tendencies which we try hard to deny in our own life as civilized and cultured individuals. This constitutes a kind of vicarious expression, like fantasies, of those of
our desires which are hardly ever admitted as truths about ourselves. Sakharam, for instance, has inordinate ego and aggressive sexual desires which fascinate the reader in spite of his shocking cruelty and sadism towards his women. That is why even when it is viewed with horror by the conservatives amongst us, the play Sakharam Binder still enjoys wide popularity and recognition. This explains how and why, in spite of the coarseness and vulgarity, his characters have struck a chord with his readers and spectators all these decades. Nilanjana S. Roy is right when she observes that “we recognized something of ourselves in all of Tendulkar’s plays, even if we didn’t always like that recognition.”

He has dealt with the theme of violence so skillfully that it is not only the characters like Sakharam, the perpetrators of violence, who compel a recognition of something of our own in them, but even the victims, the sufferers of cruelty and torture appeal to the sadist in us. Explaining this aspect of human nature, Segni emphasizes that it is always pleasing to man to hear related the torments of another. Nicoll too underlines the fact that we enjoy “primitive pleasure derived from watching pain.” He argues further that we always derive “a secret and an unacknowledged pleasure from what are truly our most primitive emotions.” This primitive thrill runs through the hearts of Tendulkar’s audiences when they watch scenes of shocking violence like the one in which Laxmi is ruthlessly thrashed by Sakharam when she obstinately resists Dawood’s joining them in chanting Aarti on Ganesh Chaturthi.

His play The Vultures, in particular, has stood the test of stage mainly because of its appeal to this savage in us all. The play makes starkly visible the violence latent in the psyche of every human being. The way Umakant, Ramakant, Manik and even their father, Hari Pitale, enjoy seeing others being victimized evinces the primitive instincts of enjoying pleasure in the pain and humiliation of others. Hari Pitale is happy when he sees his own brother humiliated and thrown out of the house by Ramakant. When Umakant hurts and scares away his own father it is like a feast to Ramakant and Manik. The pleasure of both the brothers lies in breaking the leg of their sister and in aborting her child. Despite these scenes and acts of awful bestiality, the reader and spectators remain engaged with the characters and their actions simply because they touch in us some familiar instincts of finding pleasure in the sufferings of others.

Power of Tendulkar’s art in treating the theme of violence in fact lies in his ability to gratify his audience at different levels of their sensibility. He holds them spellbound not only by bringing into play and appeasing their instincts and emotions but also by stimulating their critical
reasoning self. The pleasure peculiar to his theatre is the one which we experience in acquiring knowledge and understanding of ourselves. According to Aristotle, “To learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general.”26 The aesthetic effect that is generated by learning again has different dimensions to it. If the acquisition of understanding about how and why violence occurs yields intellectual excitement and pleasure, the knowledge that we and our situations are different from those revealed in the play also provides pleasure of relief.

All of his plays reveal very incisively the causes of various forms of violence in life and world around us through his men and women. The knowledge why Benare is victimized and persecuted so sadistically by Kashikar and his group, because of their battered masculine ego due to their failures, enhances our understanding of the causes of violence against women so rampant in hypocritical patriarchal societies like ours. This understanding of cause and effect of violence also forces us to see critically our own face in the mirror of the play. This deepening of perception and understanding of our behavior is a source of a kind of excitement peculiar to discovery of knowledge. When we understand how Sakharam Binder’s own distorting childhood experiences at the hands of insensitive and aggressive parents have made him the warped egotist, violent and sadistic male, seeking unconsciously to repair his damaged and perverted masculinity, we experience the pleasure of enlightenment not only about Sakharam but also about sexual violence in general plaguing our social life today. The revelation of how men can become totally desensitized, dehumanized and vulturine because of the unbridled spirit of grabbing money in an urbanized and materialistic culture, resulting in disintegration and fragmentation of social, familial and personal life, fills us with feelings of repugnance and horror so powerful that we remain engaged and active to the very end of the play, keen to grapple with the meaning which Tendulkar seeks to convey. The process of our engagement with the characters reflecting something that resides in the dark recesses of our own unconscious also gives some feeling of satisfaction and relief that we are somehow different from them in our experiences, attitudes and behavior, at least in degrees.

Furthermore, portrayal of brutality of the memorable and important characters in his plays, at times, jolts us into a position which makes us question the excesses and injustice they exhibit in their conduct. Violence, particularly in cases when it is totally devoid of human sensitivity and morality, tends to induce in us a reaction, yielding pleasure of thought, reflection and rejection of the immoral.
This type of pleasure is experienced by Tendulkar’s audience watching any of his plays. Excesses committed by those in *The Vultures*, for example, make us react against crass materialism of modern urban middle class man which has made him worse than a brute. It also produces, on the one hand, our thoughts and reaction against their utter moral destitution and on the other, a stance of sympathy and support for those like Rajaninath and Rama, who have retained their humanity even while living amongst these vultures. A similar pleasure of thoughts is experienced when the immorality of Ghashiram induces in us a reaction as moral and thinking beings. His act of selling his daughter to Nana, in order to become Kotwal of Poona so that he may appease his appetite for bloody revenge, offends the human in us, yielding the pleasure of reaction against such acts of immorality. Though we feel attracted towards Arun in *Kanyadaan* and share his anger and protest against oppression of his caste, we react with equal vigor against the injustice and cruelty he perpetrates on Jyoti by his brutal acts of violence, physical as well as psychological. While reading or watching the plays of Tendulkar, one, thus, remains deeply engaged both emotionally and intellectually.

The fact that Tendulkar keeps us involved at the intellectual and moral levels also, besides the emotional ones, does not, however, mean that he writes with a moral purpose. In fact, his “basic urge” in his own words “has always been to let out my concerns vis-à-vis my reality: the condition as I perceive it.” In doing so he appears to be “least concerned as to whether it is right or wrong.” He has always tried to be “objective to the extent possible.” In this context, he reminds one of Nietzsche’s views on art and morality. For Nietzsche morality is not an issue that should bother a true artist. He has strongly argued in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that morality (in its conventional sense) is the true enemy of creativity. In *The Birth of Tragedy* also maintains, “Nothing could be more opposed to the purely aesthetic interpretation and justification of the world...than the Christian teaching (moral teachings) which is and wants to be, only moral and which relegates art, *every* art, to the realm of *lies*, with its absolute standards, beginning with the truthfulness of God, it negates, judges and damns art.” Tendulkar in his practice as an artist, therefore, casts out considerations of morality and appears to be “persistently inquisitive, nonconformist, ruthlessly cold and brutal...” in depicting reality.

This is further borne out by the fact that his plays remain open ended. They certainly raise many moral or ethical questions, forcing his audience to react, but he never takes sides or offers solutions. One tends to agree with Shailaja B. Wadikar, who opines, “While exposing the
foibles and hypocrisies of an individual vis-à-vis those of society, Tendulkar urges upon the audience to ponder over their problems. The play ends without offering any solution to the audience who leave the theatre in a thinking, contemplative mood.”

His plays show that like any great artist Tendulkar is averse to giving any particular message explicitly to his audience. “There is no point giving a message deliberately,” he told Wadikar and also asserted, however, “If you look for it, you’ll see it there. Each play contains several messages.”

Kamala, for example, has been interpreted as a play advocating the cause of women, but Sarita’s decision at the end of the last scene to stay back for the time being in order to help Jaisingh through the crisis caused by his dismissal from the job seems to make it an antifeminist, status-quoist play also. Even Jaisingh Jadav, who appears to be an exploiter and oppressor of women, can be seen as the crusader against flesh trade, and thus a champion of women’s cause. Kakasaheb too has evoked divergent reactions. On the one hand, he appears to be a determined “champion of idealistic journalism” and women’s liberation and dignity; but on the other, he appears to be like any other modern educated man, who, in spite of his liberalism, has the same old views and attitudes towards woman. The way the play ends, in fact, suggests that there can be no simple and single answer which can be offered as an absolute and universal solution to the problem.

Kanyadaan also, like Kamala, throws up many questions triggering a debate within our selves, suggesting no final answers. Sharp divergence of opinions among critics as to whether the play champions the cause of the Dalits or undermines it clearly indicates that Tendulkar has only sought to deal with the reality – analytically, objectively and ruthlessly – without trying to hoist any message or solution of his own. His audience remains torn between sympathy for Arun and his people for their exploitation, miseries and degradation in the past, but feel equally disgusted with the mindless and inhuman cruelty with which he treats Jyoti. We continue to debate whether the behavior and course of action Arun has adopted serves the cause of his people or weakens it. Similarly, there are numerous questions about the efficacy and viability of views, attitudes and perspectives of people like Mr. Nath Devlalikar. If his idealism impresses the audience, his simplistic answers to the question of caste betray the ineffectual nature of his noble and pious philosophy divorced from practicality. We sympathize with and even, at times, admire Jyoti for her innocence, idealism and courage but also feel shocked by her naïveté and disturbing lack of understanding of human nature and realities of social and human relationships. Even her decision to go back to Arun without any resolution to resist him and to assert her human dignity leaves us
bewildered. None of the characters and none of their actions or decisions satisfy our urge for answers to the questions which the play poses.

One of its aesthetic effects is that his plays not only arouse our interest and keep us engaged emotionally, intellectually, morally and imaginatively but they also do not become didactic and dogmatic. It also saves his plays from unrelieved pessimism, characteristic of purely naturalistic theatre. The very fact that they do stimulate our reactions against injustice and excess of brutalities indicates that Tendulkar does not negate or deny the existence and significance of finer human impulses in us. He certainly shows that violence is a hard and undeniable reality of our life, something innate to human nature; but he also shows characters evincing qualities of kindness, compassion, love, self-sacrifice and idealism. The fact that they are outnumbered by those who exhibit cruelty and violence suggests that our world is largely dominated by the forces of violence in one form or the other. Nevertheless his characters exhibiting finer human traits do emerge impressive and offer a silver lining in the otherwise bleak world of bestiality depicted by Tendulkar.

In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, it is Benare who scores over all others and carries our sympathy and admiration. This is the case with Sarita also in *Kamala*, who promises possibilities of a better life of freedom and dignity for women in times to come. Broken and defeated Jaisingh, needing Sarita’s help at the end of the play and even Sakharam’s pathetic dependence on the strength and support of Laxmi, when the curtains come down, suggest that Tendulkar does not believe in the ultimate triumph of brutality over human values. Even Jyoti’s spirit of martyrdom and Nath’s assertion in spite of his shattering disillusionment with Arun towards the end of the play that “not all Dalits can be like that” (*KD*:556) hint at the belief that goodness cannot become extinct. In fact, what he seems to do is to dramatize, objectively and ruthlessly, the perpetual battle between conflicting forces, a phenomenon undeniably true of every individual, relationships, groups and societies. Kalindi Deshpande is not wholly off the mark when she says that “Tendulkar has of course put before the world the frightening truth about life… they seem to say that there is no escape from this frightening reality.” What she, however, fails to recognize is the clear suggestion that humans have the potentials to face these frightening realities with the help of affirmative human qualities. Tendulkar’s observation in this regard clinches the whole issue when he asserts that man would never concede his defeat: “Man surrenders to his fate. All animals are like that. But man alone feels to give a fight against fate.
And he’ll give a fight. That’s why human species has still survived.”

He looks forward to tomorrow with hope, depicting, in his own words, “the indomitability and grit of the human spirit,” without trying to draw, “unreal, comforting conclusions.”

The conclusions which one can safely draw from a close analysis of his plays is that Tendulkar is committed to present only reality, nothing but truth as he finds it in human life. Since reality is too deep, complex, variegated and inclusive, his treatment of it cannot be categorized in terms of any particular theory or philosophy. Though his theatre bears affinities with the traditions of naturalism, expressionism, existentialism and even, at times, with absurdist plays, one finds that his art, as reflection of reality, cannot be reduced to fit into the straight-jacket of any of these traditions of drama. He renders this reality powerfully and captivatingly with the help of language, style and techniques fully expressive of his view and vision of life.

Since, a play is a “work of art made of words” says Kennedy, the playwright devotes “thought and care and skill to the selection and arrangement of language.” He goes on to emphasize that even though “words are not all there is to a living play, they are its bones.”

Tendulkar himself has made some very pertinent and perceptive observations about the crucial significance of language in the art of drama. According to him, “A play basically requires living characters who speak their own language and in their separate personal style.” He emphasizes, “A good play must have characters with their own voice and expression.” “This is important in a dialogue because it establishes the character as living and real person and not a cardboard character.”

Speech pattern of each of the characters distinguishes him from others and gives him a distinct individuality. “But speech pattern,” he stresses “does not consist only of words; it also has a speech rhythm or style of speaking.” Words used by the character signify “the culture of the person, his or her region, profession and in short the whole background.”

The plays of Tendulkar clearly show that there is no exaggeration in his claim that he “can mould” his language as he wants to, “effortlessly.” Though some of the variations and nuances he attributes to his characters are lost in translations, the secret of his subtle art of characterization and powerful emotional, intellectual and aesthetic effect of his plays upon all categories of his readers and audience lies to a considerable extent on the distinctly separate speech patterns of his characters. Since the world he has depicted is fraught with violence in its brutal and shocking forms and manifestations, the language of his characters too is the language of violence. One notices that it not only reflects violence, but also acts as an instrument of
hurting the victim. The expressions with acidic and corrosive intent used frequently and with sadistic vehemence by Arun in *Kanyadaan*, which cut deep to the very marrows of Jyoti and the members of her family, can be cited as an example of this language of violence. His use of words like ‘procuress’ and ‘eunuch’ for the mother and father of Jyoti and bitter sarcasm, soaked with venom of hatred and anger against her cast and class are loaded with the intention to inflict emotional torture on trapped Jyoti. Arun’s obsession with the victimization and cruel humiliation of his people charges his language with the venom of hatred and rage against members of the higher castes. The way he fumes and bursts out like a maniac in the following speech expresses his urge to make Jyoti writhe with pain and horror: “At times a fire blazes – I want to set fire to the whole world, strangle throats, rape and kill. Drink up the blood of the beasts, your high caste society”(*KD*:514). The flow of his speech, its histrionic tone and use of hammering words of violence (‘Set fire,’ ‘Strangle throats,’ ‘Rape,’ ‘Kill,’ ‘drink up the blood of the beasts’) aim at pommelling Jyoti. This outpouring of seething anger in a blistering speech by Arun, using stunning words of violence clearly reveals him as a young representative of socio-historical and cultural realities and experience of his caste and class. Arun’s character and what he stands for are sharply distinguished from all others in the play mainly by the speech pattern attributed to him. The intensity of Arun’s anger is too virulent to let him conduct himself like a rational individual with a sense of propriety. His portrayal reminds one of Osborne’s depiction of Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger*, whose expressions of frustrations are highly vituperative and acidic. Like Jimmy, Arun, too, appears to suffer from an excessive sense of deprivation and degradation. This makes him an egotist, which is revealed effectively by his tendency of indulging in rhetorical self-dramatizations. This is evidenced by his tendency to indulge in over externalized rhetoric of vindication of self and reviling of others. This is what we hear when he praises his own book:

ARUN: I am told that professors are shocked out of their wits by the experiences described in this book… Such writing has not appeared in the last ten decades–so buzz the insects in your field of criticism. It is said that the book will get the Sahitya Akademi award. Let it come, who cares? What do those bloody buggers know of life? All Maratha literature is stuffed with the petty bourgeois outlook and with soppy romanticism. I am the only one after the saint poets–who else is there?(*KD*:550-51).
It is significant to note that Arun’s ego-charged outbursts against others allow little scope for ‘thinking aloud.’ Pauses and silences, required for inwardness, for reflections and self-seeing, are rather conspicuous by their absence. His verbal rhetoric, therefore, exposes the mediocrity of the intellectual level of the speaker and also forces the audience to critique his language objectively. His naturalistically based idiom, it seems, does not accommodate expressions of unexpected and subtly nuanced states of minds and experiences. Tendulkar conveys the nature of experience and the character of his men and women, piercing through the veneer of culture and civilization, by the use of naturalistic expressions in almost all of his plays. This appears to be very effective particularly in the case of the characters who exhibit the dominance of naturalistic human instincts in their lives.

Language used by Sakharam in *Sakharam Binder* provides further examples of the naturalistic base of his vocabulary. He, by his own claims and assertions, is a man and not a saint: “I tell you, worship and prayer can’t satisfy the itch. If you want a thing, well, you’ve got to have it! What’s there to hide?”(*SB*:127). He admits boldly and frankly that the “body has its appetites” and there is nothing wrong in satisfying it. It may bother the orthodox audience, conditioned by the language of conventional theatre, but Sakharam speaks the language of his body and its appetites without any inhibition. He frequently uses ‘foul-mouthed’ expressions to refer to his ‘itch,’ which “is no ordinary appetite”(*SB*:135). No one can miss the sexual overtones in his comments about Laxmi when he turns her out in a fit of rage: “It’s not as if she’s got a special one made of gold while every other woman’s is just brass one….”(*SB*:150). Words like ‘slut,’ ‘bitch,’ ‘bloody,’ ‘swine,’ ‘damn,’ ‘shameless wretch,’ ‘brat,’ ‘rascal,’ ‘impotent,’ are always on his lips. His aggressive appetite and its violent expressions flow easily and spontaneously in utterances like: “I’ll slit your throat” (*SB*:182). “I’ll twist that foot of yours, you get me? Now sit up. You’re not to sleep. Wake up….No, you can sleep later. Get up and laugh. Laugh or I’ll choke the life out of you. Laugh! Laugh! Go on, laugh!” (*SB*:141). “I’ll thrash the life out of you. There is no stopping me….I want you” (*SB*:171). “Come here—all these airs….Your body can go to hell. I haven’t kept you here to pamper your body. Come on now—Come on—”(*SB*:193). “Damn your mother’s—….Drink—drink—drink some more—Open your jaws—don’t spit, you slut—Drink, drink or I’ll—Drink—Come on, drink”(*SB*:194).

His speech pattern clearly reveals that he is a highly egotistical man who seeks to proclaim and prove his manliness through the language and actions of violent self-assertions.
“I’ve never put up with even a word from anybody and here’s this niggling bit of cast-off woman trying to lord over me. Forget it! I’ll beat the life out of her” (SB:150). He often refers to himself in third person, indicating his presumptuousness, pride and sense of godlike supremacy: “This is not a royal palace. It’s Sakharam Binder’s house. And Sakharam Binder is not like your previous man. You’ll find out what he’s like” (SB:125). “This Sakharam Binder—he’s a terror …. He’s not scared of God or of God’s father!” (SB:126). “Remember, this is not a king’s, but Sakharam Binder’s palace” (SB:127). Through his rhetoric of self-assertions and proclamations, Tendulkar subtly hints at Sakharam’s hollowness. He, like Arun, is incapable of contemplation, introspection and enlightenment. His language of bravado, in fact, camouflages the man whose sense of self had been bruised and battered by his abusive childhood experiences. This reality of his personality gets exposed when the audience towards the end of the play see him terribly scared. “[Shudders and mutters faintly.] Murder! [More clearly] Murder! [Faintly] Murder, Murder, Murder!” (SB:196).

The language attributed to Sakharam is the real language of a man of the class, conditions and type of character he represents. Even when it may appear offensive to a section of audience, it keeps them spell-bound by the sheer force of its being the language of honesty, the uninhibited expression of the real man beneath the mask of pretensions of culture and civilization. This is not, however, to say that Tendulkar has given this kind of language only to men, who are generally considered to be aggressive, violent and rough. He depicts women, too, in their natural self, capable of the same roughness, vulgarity and violence. Champa captures the mind of the audience particularly for these qualities of her character expressed through her actions and language, unfeminine by conventional standards. Words like ‘swine,’ ‘pig,’ ‘ninny,’ ‘corpse,’ ‘worm,’ ‘son of bitch,’ ‘dog,’ etc. come so easily and freely to her that they seem to be a part of her natural speech. None can miss the authoritative tone, words of command, raciness in dialogues, very expressive rhythm and subtle modulations in pitch of voice in her following words to Sakharam: “What is it? Who’s that? It’s you! Same thing on your mind again! I told you, didn’t I? Why won’t you understand? If I feel cut up, I can turn nasty. Take care not to rub me the wrong way. I don’t like it—all that man-woman stuff. [Sakharam is standing at a distance.] Go, go and sleep out there” (SB:168).

One notices that the individualities of the characters are revealed to a great extent by the kind of language they use. Tendulkar himself argues the importance of the speech pattern that
“helps to particularize the character and to make it an individual rather than a type.”

Though there are certainly some similarities between the types of language Sakharam and Champa use, there are some very clear and striking differences which bring out their peculiarities and establish them as sharply individuated characters. Since Sakharam broadly is a plain and straight-forward man, declaring, prescribing and asserting the rules and conditions, he demands his women to conform to in unambiguous and direct language, the speech patterns of Champa lay bare her greater sharpness of mind, cleverness and unconventionality which makes her a challenging and, therefore, a charming woman. In her very first appearance in the play with Sakharam, the silent language of her eyes, looking around the house, her smile and the way she looks into his eyes enrapture him making him speechless. Frequent pauses in his speech in the scene clearly indicate that Sakharam is overwhelmed so much by her charm that he has to struggle hard to keep up the face and tone of a man of authority, not vulnerable to any weakness for her. Her looks and manners here characterized by elements of casualness, ease and confidence derived from her consciousness of the feminine powers, set her up as a hypnotizing challenge to his masculine bravado. In fact, she continues to remain the center of attraction, curiosity and suspense for the reader for her potentials to spring sudden and sharper surprises on the audience than even Sakharam. Her dialogues, for example, as the following one, sparkle with wit and reveal a brilliant mind, offering a good deal of humor and entertainment to the audience:

SAKHARAM. If you don’t like it, you can go out.
CHAMPA. Why? Is there another house outside?
SAKHARAM. No. This is all there is. And it’s not a king’s palace. It’s Sakharam Binder’s house.
CHAMPA. Sakharam Binder? Who’s he?
SAKHARAM. [Slightly confused.] Me!
CHAMPA. Oh, I see! I thought it was someone else. Really I did! (SB:157).

Again, in the same scene when Champa asks Sakharam to make her a nice cup of tea:

SAKHARAM. What? That’s a woman’s job.
CHAMPA. Then call her.
SAKHARAM. I don’t mean a servant. I mean the woman of the house.
CHAMPA. You mean me? But I’ve never made tea in all my life (SB:158).
Her repartees, her bantering and teasing words and style, and the way she cleverly punctures his inflated ego by feigning innocence reveal her lively spirit which distinguishes her from all the other characters in the play.

The language attributed to his characters is not only transparently expressive of their peculiarities but is also in full consonance with their class and milieu. It, thus, particularizes both the individuality of his men and women as well as the environment they represent. Though this can be noticed in the case of characters in each of his plays but it seems to be a special feature of the language allotted to characters like Hari Pitale, Ramakant, Umakant and Manik in *The Vultures*. The play’s main thrust is to lay bare the barbarity and vulgarity of men and women of modern urban middle class, dehumanized by the singular pursuit of money and personal interest.

One of the main features of modernist life is the merger of one’s individuality into the impersonal and mechanical mass culture driven by the naturalistic ethics of survival and ruthless competition. This has reduced man to the level of brutes, stripped off all those finer qualities which he has acquired through the evolution of culture and which distinguish humans from animals and even individuals from each other. The impact of urban materialistic milieu is so deep and overwhelming that the individuals have lost their separate identities and speak almost the same language – the language of money and violence.

The speech patterns of Hari Pitale, Umakant, Ramakant and Manik resemble each other so closely that they appear to speak the same language because they together represent the pervasive and penetrative impact of money-mania on modern men and women. They all use freely words like ‘pimps,’ ‘bastards,’ ‘bloody,’ ‘swine,’ ‘scoundrel,’ ‘bugger,’ ‘corpse,’ ‘brat,’ ‘bitch,’ ‘whore’ etc. Frequent use of words like ‘money,’ ‘bank account,’ ‘cash,’ ‘cheque,’ ‘share,’ ‘property,’ ‘blackmail,’ ‘fraud,’ ‘crooked,’ ‘cheated,’ ‘profit,’ ‘lawsuit mortgage,’ ‘creditors,’ ‘competition’ etc. reveal the defining values and concerns of these characters. The abundance of words and phrases expressing hatred, threats and violent actions such as ‘bloody miser,’ ‘lick penny,’ ‘bloody ruffian,’ ‘she devil,’ ‘die a whore,’ “finish off the bastard, push him out of her belly, tear him out” (*TV*:264) may be shocking to the audience, but it is the inevitable language of the savage in them. Though the play is replete with such language of violence, the following examples can reveal the bizarre nature of this vulturine world: “I’ll bash your bloody brains out!,” “I’ll knock the bastard’s block off! I’ll crack him open like cockroach” (*TV*:228).
“I’ll tear you lengthwise!” (TV:230). “I’ll sit on your neck. I’ll make you puke it out! Bloody animal! Swindler! I’ll see you in the gutter!” (TV:255).

Tendulkar, it seems, has given the same language to all these four characters deliberately in order to suggest that their distinctions as humans and as individuals have been completely wiped out by the forces of violence and materialism rampant in their world. But Tendulkar, it appears, is not a nihilist and does not believe in total defeat of finer human qualities. Even in the midst of beasts, men and women, speaking the language of compassion, sympathy, love, tenderness and sincerity also survive in the form of Rama and Rajaninath. If the language used by Pitale and his sons and daughter is characterized by feelings of mutual distrust, intrigue, fear, greed, hatred, aggression, incest and sadism, words, tone and pitch in the speech patterns of Rama and Rajaninath convey mutual trust, warmth, kindness, emotional sensitivity and moral human concerns and considerations. Language attributed to Rajaninath and Rama reveals not only some of the traits common to them and their situation, but when observed closely, they are also heard using language peculiar to them as separate individuals, indicating difference in their positions as man and woman, in their visions of life and in their roles and temperament. The language of his characters appears to be so spontaneous and true to their situation and traits because Tendulkar, as he says, acts as he writes: “In my mind I emote the lines of the characters as I write ….They are not written words but a total and spontaneous expression of the mind and the personality of the character which includes not only the words but also the eloquent silence in between the words. Also the order of the words which is at times grammatically wrong. Broken sentences. And the subtle emphasis on certain words. Even the pitch of the voice. The gestures of the hands. A movement if there is any.”49

In a drama that deals with violence, the language of silence and that of gesture can prove to be a very powerful and expressive tool. Though one can find examples of the use of silence as language in almost all the plays of Tendulkar, it has been used very effectively in Kamala and Silence! The Court is in Session. Silence and pauses are used in Kamala to reveal the violence or oppression of Jaisingh as well as the hurt it causes to Sarita. At times, silence completes and conveys the meaning which the character is otherwise afraid or feels shy of articulating in words. The silence imposed on Benare is an eloquent expression of the woman’s suffering, suffocation, repression and denial of voice in a society dominated by hypocritical representatives of orthodox patriarchal morality. The reality of poseurs like Kashikar, Sukhatme and Karnik is expressed
more loudly than words by their gestures, movements and the poses they strike. If their spoken speech conveys their assumed and pretended selves, the gestures and poses expose what lies in their buried self.

Besides silence, gestures and movements, sound, too, has been used to evoke an atmosphere to convey the theme and to reveal the truth residing in the inner recesses of the men and women he has depicted. As in the theatre of Artaud, in Tendulkar’s also, sound, along with visual imagery, provides a powerful sensory experience which actually enters the inner psyche of the audience and provokes a strong emotional and intellectual response. Its use in The Vultures is a striking example of how sound imagery plays a vital role in the structure, theme and in the presentation of characters. In the house of Hari Pitale, described by Rajaninath as “a whole in a tree where vultures lived,” the screeching of vultures is heard at all the important points during the action of the play. In fact, what the audience hear and see, in scene 1, as soon as the curtain rises is “…a shrill screeching of vultures for sometimes” and the scene ends with the same “loud screeching of vultures” where, “Pappa is seen, working his toothless mouth. Rama just standing there blinking her eyes. Ramakant and Umakant looking here and there, picking their teeth and ears. Manik scratching her head – laughing”.

Scene-II also opens with the sound of a bird, this time cuckoo, at a distance: “… calls out hopefully. And suddenly ends on a strangled note”. The recurrence of these sounds conveys the intention of the playwright to expose the human species signifying “the presence of animal in man along with animal instincts.” In the midst of these humans with predatory tendencies is Rama, represented variously by the images of doe, deer or cuckoo, signifying innocence, magnanimity and gentleness – qualities which seem to have become rarities in the modern urban world of crude and ruthless materialism. The images of the hunter and the hunted, birds and cages, wolf, boars, tiger, cat, dogs, pig, parrots, crow, ant, dead hen, poor man’s mare, worms, monsters, devils, jaws, etc. are some of the other recurrent animal images used to lay bare the prevalence and intensity of violence in its brutal forms. These images are fully integrated with the theme and characters in his plays serving to convey the violence as the reality of life. Their importance in generating the mood and atmosphere peculiar to the plays can in no way be overemphasized.

His stage setting, given in details in each of his plays, lighting, background music and costumes further contribute to the aesthetic effect of his theatre. Music, for example, in
Gashiram Kotwal, has been used with remarkable dramatic skills. It is almost continuously heard in different forms indicating development of action, nature of events, change in the mood of characters and atmosphere of the play. It binds the whole drama into a subtly unified organic hole and we see that “the play which opens with song and dance turns a full circle with Nana joining the crowd in singing and dancing at the end.”\(^5\) As the play opens, the music we hear is rhythmical traditional song of invocation to gods which has a lulling effect. After the dance, the tempo increases and then again “slower, deeper, rhythmically”\((GK:\text{362})\) Ganapati dances with music. But as the action moves, the slow deep rhythm of music and song changes to Lavani accompanied by tabla, which adds to the mood and atmosphere of sensuousness and passion hinting at Nana’s lust and decadence of Poona Brahmins. The Lavani and tabla beats are replaced by mridanga drum beats. In the words of Jabber Patel, “The music becomes denser, underlining the violence that is to be unleashed.”\(^5\) Holy chanting of gods’ names further acts as cover for scenes of eroticism and torture.

In fact, the role of music in aestheticizing terrible rage and brutal violence is of crucial significance in this work. For instance, audience can clearly notice the rising anger of Ghashiram and the coming violence when “the mridanga starts a forceful beat. Ghashiram dances to that beat, a war dance, banging his fist in the dust”\((GK:\text{377})\). When one of the Poona Brahmins, accused of theft is put through the fire ordeal and is tortured most cruelly, the other Brahmins begin chanting: “Radha Krishna Hari Mukunda Murari ... with instruments as if wanting to drown the screams”\((GK:\text{397})\). Music here serves to intensify the tension and horror of the atmosphere. This blending of violence and music with its highly expressive beats, rhythm and pace, in this scene, not only conveys the fury of brutality but also makes it fascinating for the audience. The pleasure it yields to the audience is, perhaps, akin to the pleasure which Edmund Burk in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* talks of when he argues that “we have a degree of delight and no small one, in the real misfortunes and pain of others....”\(^5\) Even the gruesome spectacle of Ghashiram’s violent death is made aesthetically powerful and effective by the accompanying beat of dholki, when the mob move to pummel him to death. “The drums beat loud and fast. Ghashiram begins to move in a sort of dance as if dying to the beat of the drum” \((GK:\text{415})\). This way Ghashiram’s dying throes are expressed through music and dance without using words.
If music, thus, serves to intensify tension and conveys moods and actions of violence, it also saves it from becoming too nerve wrecking by offering moments of relief. As has been noticed by critics like N. Ramadevi,\textsuperscript{55} D.K. Pabby,\textsuperscript{56} M.S. Bapu\textsuperscript{57} and Shailaja. B. Wadikar,\textsuperscript{58} music also enables the audience to look at the scenes, characters and events in the play from distance and with detachment. In this way, if on the one hand Tendulkar has used music to create a world of make-believe, an illusion of reality, he has also, on the other hand, provided the audience with an opportunity to understand and respond to the play in a critical manner. The role of music in \textit{Ghashiram Kotwal} therefore, is one of the notable dramatic feats, giving Tendulkar and his \textit{Ghashiram Kotwal} a special place in modern Indian theatre.

It also provides an example of Tendulkar’s ability to use tradition of folk theatre by blending it with both classical and modern traditions. What distinguishes his genius as a dramatist is the fact that he has written plays which bring to mind Greek drama, naturalistic, realistic, expressionistic and even surrealistic theatres on the one hand and the Indian classical drama, as well as folk forms of Tamasha, Dashavatar, Khel, Nautanki etc. on the other. It is therefore difficult to force his theatrical oeuvre into any single philosophy, theory or tradition. In fact, his stage deals with life as he perceives it in its wholeness, entertaining, exciting and enthralling the audience with the totality of dramatic effect. This he achieves through a very skillful use of all the devices necessary for a play to succeed not only on the pages of the text but also and more importantly, on the stage. His art of characterization, plot construction, handling of different dimensions and complexities of conflict, language, gestures, silences, gaps, sound, imagery, lighting, spectacle and music, all combine, cohere and fuse together so well that the reader and the audience leave his plays carrying their powerful impact on their sensibility.
References


3ibid.

4ibid., p. xx-xxi.

5Vijay Tendulkar, *Tendulkar and Violence: Then and now*. Documentary.

6Makarand Sathe in *Tendulkar and Violence: Then and now*. Documentary.

7ibid.


10ibid.


12ibid.


18 ibid.

19 ibid.


23 Segni qtd. in Allardyce Nicoll, p. 136.

24 ibid.

25 ibid., p. 137.

26 Aristotle qtd. in S.H. Butcher, p.15.


29 ibid.


33 Shailaja B. Wadikar, pp. 3-4.

34 Vijay Tendulkar qtd. in Wadikar, “Face-to-Face with Vijay Tendulkar,” p. 148.
35 Vikram Gokhale, p.152.


37 Vijay Tendulkar qtd. in Wadikar, Interview “Face-to-Face with Vijay Tendulkar,” p. 155.

38 Vijay Tendulkar, Natak Ani Mee (Thane: Dimple Publications, 1997), p. 188.


40 ibid., p. 952.

41 Vijay Tendulkar, “The Play is the thing,” p. xxx.

42 ibid., p. xxix.

43 ibid., p. xxviii

44 ibid.

45 ibid., p. xxix.

46 ibid., p. x.


48 Vijay Tendulkar, “The Play is the Thing,” p. xxix.

49 ibid., p. x-xi.


55 N. Ramadevi, p. 94.

