Chapter-1

Introduction

Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008), a versatile genius, an author of a number of short stories, books for children, screenplays, essays and novels is widely acclaimed as one of the leading modern Indian dramatists like Girish Karnard, Badal Sircar, Mohan Rakesh, Aasif Currimbhoy and Mahesh Dattani. A prolific writer, with twenty seven full-length and twenty five one-act plays to his credit, he has become a name to reckon with, both in India and abroad, with the translations of his major plays such as *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1968), *Encounter in Umbugland* (1969), *The Vultures* (1971), *Sakharam Binder* (1972), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972), *Kamala* (1982), *A Friend’s Story* (1982) and *Kanyadaan* (1983). He has come to be regarded as one of the most revolutionary and controversial playwrights whose works have generated endless debates and discussions about his themes and style, his view and vision of life. If he has been described as an iconoclast and a rebel, he has also been accused of being a conservative, seeking to preserve the status-quo. His handling of social realities like caste and class, cause of women, conflict between individual and society, questions of alienation and survival, power and politics and psychological interpretations of his plays have been favourite subjects of study for his critics. A look at the corpus of critical works on him, however, shows that in spite of the huge response his plays have evoked, there are certain significant aspects of his mind and art, which have not yet been accorded the critical attention and appreciation they deserve. His treatment of the theme of violence and its effects on his art as a dramatist can be cited as one of the examples of this limitation in the scholarship and criticism on him. Moreover, one finds that barring a few full length studies, most of his critics have examined in the form of articles one or the other of his plays, providing thereby a scanty and fragmented view of his genius. The resulting gaps and imbalances emerge very clearly once one surveys the critical oeuvre on Tendulkar.

Shailaja B. Wadikar’s book *Vijay Tendulkar: A Pioneer Playwright* is one of the very few full-length studies done on Tendulkar’s plays so far. Almost all the important plays of Tendulkar come up for analysis in her attempt at giving a cursory and brief analysis from “various points of view, such as psychological, sociological, politico-cultural, deterministic, existential, feminist, Marxist etc.” According to her, “While portraying life as it is, his attention is, by and large, focused, not on the happy, gleeful aspects of life but on human weaknesses,
follies, and foibles." She views Tendulkar as a “silent social activist” with clear social commitment giving “the crude and banal aspects of life a dramatic garb.” Wadikar describes him as a dramatist who evinces faith in human values, expressed without any attempt at moralizing and philosophizing about them.

Since the book by her own admission is “a brief, cursory” analysis of a range of issues, some vital aspects of Tendulkar’s concerns and their artistic treatment, deserving a more detailed and in depth study, have escaped her probing gaze. Though she does make references to social and psychological factors responsible for aggression and violence in the behaviour of Tendulkar’s characters, she fails to spotlight the forces and drives operative in the psyche of characters like Sakharam. Even the variety of ways characters respond to violence in their lives doesn’t get explored in his study. As a result of this, human complexities, challenging the understanding of the mind of the audience and making his characters more interesting and life-like, go almost unappreciated by Wadikar.

Similar limitations characterize the book-length study of Tendulkar by N.S. Dharan. In The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar, he has attempted to analyze the playwright’s treatment of such questions as individual and society, man-woman relationships, contemporary politics, social tensions and conflicts and alienation of modern men and women. Structures and techniques used by Tendulkar in his plays have also come up for some discussion in the work. During the course of his analysis, he talks cursorily about power, repression and violence in his plays, but nowhere does he seem to make any serious attempt to explore, interpret and reveal the working of this phenomenon in human life and society. Different forms of violence, its nature and sources, the way Tendulkar turns even the goriest and most brutal situations into an object of aesthetic value, have eluded the critic.

Among Tendulkar’s critics, the study of women’s question in his plays has been one of the noticeable areas of interest. But most of the writers on this aspect of his theme have adopted feminist approach and have tried to project him as a champion of this movement in Indian theatre. For example, N.S. Dharan in his article “Gyno-centrism in Silence! The Court is in Session and Kamala,” states that in these women-centered works “feministic ideology which pits women in direct encounter with chauvinistic male oppressor, finds its full and free expression.” Noting that both Leela Benare and Sarita are educated and efficient women, he asserts that both
of them “refuse to be cowed down by men.” He concludes that through these plays, “Tendulkar projects a point of view that is peculiarly feminine – tending to be even feministic….”

Dharan’s study is an example of how critics have tended to ignore the depth and complexity in Tendulkar’s treatment of different issues. He, for example, ignores the fact of certain contradictions in the character of Benare, resulting from her position as a woman in patriarchy. Benare is bold and rebellious on the one hand but is also seen trying desperately to find a husband so that she could give a good name to her otherwise illegitimate child. The way she sinks into silence in the second act and appears to be helplessly surrendering herself as a woman to the insensate authority of men finds no place in his discussion. Moreover, why Mrs. Kashikar behaves the way she does as a woman persecuting another woman, too, has eluded his attention. Tendulkar has, it seems, dramatized the sufferings and social oppression of all those who are weak, including men like Rokde, indicating thereby that his attitude and vision are too broad to be cramped into the narrow framework of any particular ideology. This is also corroborated by Tendulkar himself when he told Wadikar and L.S. Deshpande in an interview that “gender discrimination plays no role here. What counts here is person, or whatever happens to him/her.”

Like Dharan, Veena Noble Dass too presents Tendulkar as a feminist and declares in her article, “Women Characters in Vijay Tendulkar’s Plays,” that he has succeeded “in portraying them differently and raised the status of Indian woman from a weak person to a powerful one.” Talking of Rama in The Vultures, she is very emphatic in stating that “Tendulkar has portrayed a very bold woman in the character of Rama… who doesn’t believe in her fate but would do anything to change her life.” One finds that in her sweeping assertions, Dass has not taken due cognizance of certain vital facts and situations dramatized in the play. For instance, the way Rama has to put up with the vulturine ways of her family indicates how difficult it may be for a woman to live the life of her own choice because of her traditional upbringing and dependence on man. At the end of the play Rama is seen to follow “that living death, her master, / With the dogged loyalty” (TV:201). Moreover, Dass also conveniently ignores Tendulkar’s depiction of men like Rajaninath, who, like Rama, is no less a victim of this brutality of his family. One may also notice that Tendulkar has also presented a woman like Manik who is as much cruel as her brothers are. The whole essay, in fact, appears to deal rather simplistically with Tendulkar’s treatment of the life of women in his plays. Like Dharan, Dass too forgets that Tendulkar is
concerned primarily with the larger social and human situations depicted as much through his male characters as it is through the female ones.

Geeta Kumar’s study “Portrayal of Women in Tendulkar’s Silence! The Court is in Session and Sakharam Binder,” too doesn’t seem to be much different in its scope and approach from that of Veena Noble Dass. Like her, Geeta Kumar also overlooks the social context which has been depicted by Tendulkar as a potent force in determining the life and character of his women. In her discussion she fails to analyze the male characters and their relations with women, as a result of which her assessment of women in these plays appears to be a bit lopsided. For example, she doesn’t place Champa’s character, described by her as stern, sensual, self-seeking and indiscreet, in the context of her experiences as a daughter and as a wife. That is why Geeta Kumar tends to see her as a woman with rather negative traits, something which doesn’t seem to support her own assertion that “there is an underlying current of sympathy towards the women characters created by him.”

Geeta dwells at some length on the character of Benare and Laxmi to instantiate her statement about Tendulkar’s sympathy with women figures. But, here too, she seems to oversimplify matters by ignoring the dynamics and complexity of responses to their situations.

This trend of looking at Tendulkar from a feministic perspective has continued and the article of Vijay Kumar Sinha, “Feminist Concern in Vijay Tendulkar’s Plays,” also emphasizes the same, though in a slightly different way. He stresses that Tendulkar “deals with feminist concern in a remarkably distinct way. A good number of his dramas translated into English highlight the bias against women.” If critics discussed above have concentrated exclusively on the female characters, Vijay Kumar Sinha has focused his study almost entirely on the prejudice against women, resulting in seriously diluting the focus on the strengths of Tendulkar’s women. For example, talking of Kamala he hints at the oppression, commodification and exploitation of women like Kamala and Sarita by hypocritical and materialistic Jaisingh, as an evidence of Tendulkar’s feminist concerns. But in the absence of any reference by him to Sarita’s growth into a strong woman, resolute not to remain a slave any longer, his study appears to be very limited and lopsided, failing thereby to underline the playwright’s faith in the possibility and power of women to fight for their human dignity.

Tendulkar’s treatment of woman’s question has been approached from yet another angle as well. If critics cited above have tended to place Tendulkar in the tradition of feminism,
Kalindi Deshpande, Catherine Thankamma, D.S. Deshpande, Maya Pandit and Neelam Mansingh believe that his plays betray his patriarchal bias. Their studies are based on the argument that Tendulkar has given only stereotypical images of feminine behaviour of women which is a projection of his masculine mind and imagination. Moreover, they contend that the way men are portrayed and the place of domination is accorded to them in his plays suggest his traditional leanings.

The very title of Kalindi Deshpande’s essay “Capitulation to Conservatism: Vijay Tendulkar’s Women Characters” unequivocally conveys the contention of this group of Tendulkar’s readers. She categorically states that “almost all his women characters meekly submit to the injustice, violence and harassment done to them. They seem to be helpless and have no other alternative but to go through the way that life has chosen for them.” Kalindi’s assertions suggest that she doesn’t attach much importance to the struggles of his women for their survival and dignity. It is difficult to agree that women like Benare and Vijaya submit meekly to their lot. Benare stands out as a woman who asserts his individuality and struggles to achieve and preserve her human dignity. Vijaya, in fact, is the one who even vanquishes all male chauvinists and proves her strength and superiority over them.

Kalindi further observes that “Tendulkar, by giving an existential – fatalistic? – twist to a woman’s suffering, tries to wriggle out of his responsibility of putting a woman’s suffering in a social context and interpret it accordingly.” The charge that Tendulkar has not dramatized the predicament of women in the context of social milieu, it seems, is something that is rather surprising. His plays clearly show that all his women are products of the typical patriarchal, social and cultural world. They are also, at the same time, locked up in a struggle against its coercive and constrictive power. The characters and plights of women like Benare, Kamala, Sarita, Laxmi, Champa, Mitra and Jyoti become convincing to the audience and evoke their sympathy and identification mainly because of their social contextualization. If they are viewed in isolation of the social environs they have been put in, much of their appeal as complex individuals and humans gets lost to us.

The conclusion that Tendulkar capitulates to the power of conservative and established system is equally not well supported by a close analysis of the plays. The very fact that he has exposed the ugliness and brutality, hollowness and horror of these forces underlines by implication the need of a more humane and sensitive system of values and attitudes in life.
Through the sufferings and struggles, resoluteness of mind and firmness of will displayed in varying degrees by his women, he clearly affirms his faith in human potentials to stand up and fight for a just and better deal in society. The whole essay by Kalindi, it appears, gives us certain unreconciled statements, not substantiated with necessary textual evidences. If on the one hand, she is vehement in describing Tendulkar’s attitude as that of capitulation to conservatism, she says on the other hand that “Tendulkar has paid a fulsome compliment to female sexuality”\textsuperscript{21} by depicting Rama as “angrily setting aside all the confines of conventionality.”\textsuperscript{22}

Some of the limitations of Kalindi’s reading of Tendulkar are perceptible also in “Women that Patriarchy Created: The plays of Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani and Mahashweta Devi,” an article by Catherine Thankamma. She thinks that “the disturbing fact about Tendulkar’s treatment of women… is the world view that gets projected. Very often one gets the impression that the driving force is sensationalism and not social commitment.”\textsuperscript{23} Her whole argument is based on the assumption that by depicting “women solely as victims”\textsuperscript{24} and men as oppressive and exploitative, treating women only “as subjects to be exploited, as possessions, not as individuals with feelings and desires of their own,”\textsuperscript{25} Tendulkar tends to reinforce the patriarchal world view. Thankamma, it seems, is able to take only a partial view of the world Tendulkar has presented. The effects of social realities, which Tendulkar depicts on his men, deserve as much notice as does his dramatization of the role of patriarchy in conditioning women’s existence. Moreover, her charge that Tendulkar lacks social commitment also appears to be the result of her not taking a holistic view of his plays. Certainly, Tendulkar clearly states that he does not use theatre as a means of propaganda but he emphasizes that “the audience can obtain several messages from it.”\textsuperscript{26} Talking of his treatment of women, for example, he asserts that when the members of his audience “go home and chew on the situation, they might be able to see their daughter or sister in the woman’s position and come up with a way of changing the situation for her advantage.”\textsuperscript{27} His depiction of victimization of women certainly lays open to critical scrutiny the patriarchal ethos with its unwholesome effects on both the sexes, something which Thankamma fails to appreciate.

Maya Pandit, too, furthers the view that Tendulkar’s women are “basically projected as victims of a family system which they cannot challenge and change.”\textsuperscript{28} She thinks that this sense of “doom and failure emerges as the most important conclusion regarding family in his later plays.”\textsuperscript{29} According to her, “Family becomes the site not only of the subjugation of women. It
emerges as the space where they will be inevitably destroyed.” Her conclusion is “the self-critical awareness of the earlier plays like Shantata and even Kamala and the faint glimmer of the hope of a political action for change was present there but with Kanyadaan and even Ghashiram Kotwal, the vision becomes dark and pessimistic.”

Maya Pandit’s analysis of Tendulkar’s treatment of women in the context of patriarchal ideology of family is interesting, enlightening and well-argued, underlining the increasing note of pessimism in his plays. But a close analysis of her essay reveals that she remains preoccupied with analyzing Tendulkar’s depiction of family as an ideological state apparatus, destroying women by dispossessing them of all their rights as individuals and humans. As a result of this focus only on family and women, the question of Tendulkar’s treatment of men in patriarchy and how in different ways it distorts their psyche and behaviour, making them aggressive and violent, gets completely obscured. Even her conclusion that Tendulkar projects a pessimistic view of women’s lot in family doesn’t appear to be very convincing. One feels that she hasn’t been able to appreciate Tendulkar’s art of underlining the value of healthy human relationships and outlook by dramatizing powerfully the shattering and destructive consequences of dehumanizing ways and values of man. Further, the fact that the characters like Rama impress the audience as signs of finer humanity, living even in the midst of vultures, indicates that hope is not altogether dead in this world. Moreover, he also underlines the necessity on the part of women, too, to take control of their own minds and bodies as rational individuals by presenting a character like Jyoti in a highly ironical manner, a fact that is lost sight of by most of Tendulkar’s readers.

Besides the social issues of gender relationships, critics have also turned their attention to his plays subjecting them to the analysis of some other social issues using different critical perspectives. One of them is post-colonial approach adopted to interpret his plays like The Vultures and Ghashiram Kotwal.

Like most of the other studies, Uday Shankar Ojha has made an interesting and perceptive study of The Vultures as an example of crude realism using post-colonial perspective. He makes passing references to Marxian, feminist and psychoanalytic theories in his attempt to analyze Tendulkar’s treatment of modern urban middle class families disintegrated and fragmented due to growing materialism and consumerism. He also notes Tendulkar’s exposure of the malady of alienation of modern urban individuals living a loveless and joyless life. He,
however, sees in the play some element of hope dramatized through the love relationship between Rama and Rajaninath.

The whole article tends to emphasize the role of material conditions in dehumanizing and deforming the life of modern man, completely ignoring in the process Tendulkar’s deep and abiding concerns in understanding and dramatizing the reality of human nature which, Tendulkar feels, shows man as not much different from animals in his basic instincts and drives like that of greed, lust and violence.

In his preoccupation with bringing out the effects of modern, capitalist urban middle class milieu, he has tended to obscure the importance of characters as individuals. Even when he talks of the possibility of love as a redeeming power, represented by relationship between Rama and Rajaninath, he is inclined to talk about it at the level of symbolism, failing to see them as realistically drawn human individuals with their distinct strengths and weaknesses impacting their situations. They are the ones who have succeeded in retaining their humanity intact in spite of the vultures around them and the brutalizing economic, social and cultural conditions they are surrounded by. Vibha Saxena’s “Ghashiram Kotwal: A Post-Colonial Perspective” is an interesting and illuminating attempt at analyzing Tendulkar’s expose of how power leads to degeneration, corruption, sexuality and violence. She examines its political, cultural, caste and gender paradigms underlining the brutalization and exploitation of the weak by the powerful. She believes that Tendulkar “strives towards assaying the contemporary realities in the garb of a historical situation.”33 Vibha suggests that through the story of Ghashiram and Nana, Tendulkar has dramatized the perpetual game of power with its inevitable consequences in the history of human society.

Like most of the other critics on the play, she has concentrated on analyzing the misuse or abuse of power by the dominant group or person in marginalizing and subjugating the other. As a result of this focus mainly on showing through obvious instances in the play how power results in degeneration and cruelty, she tends to neglect deep insights into the complex dynamics of power and violence which Tendulkar has depicted very artistically and which imparts human depths and complexity to the play. Tendulkar’s treatment of mob psychology on the one hand and his insights into the working of the psyche of a man like Ghashiram, who has, to begin with, no sense of position or power in the everyday social world on the other, goes totally unexamined by her.
Another study from this perspective made by Maya Pandit also neglects the question of violence in its various manifestations as depicted in *Ghashiram Kotwal* in a cause and effect manner. Her article, “Deliberate Dismantling of an Icon,” however, is a piece of scholarly attempt at showing how contradictions and conflicts “in the material power politics are sought to be resolved on the site of cultural production.” She analyses the play by locating it “not only in the contemporary cultural ethos but also in the historical context of the colonial discourse.” The play for her is “more about Nana than Ghishiram and also about the degeneration and moral political corruption in the Peshwai....” This negative image of the Peshwa and his class was created and propagated by the English rulers to “prove the Indians as weak, immoral, degenerate and incapable of just government....” Pandit goes on to cite examples from social, political and cultural history to reveal how this image was contested by the upper class and caste who reacted and revived the icon of Nana Phandnavis as “an able administrator, a great statesman, and a morally and ethically upright, religious and god fearing ruler.” They protested, therefore, vehemently against Tendulkar for “subversively attacking” what they believed to be the glorious tradition of Peshwai and the Brahmins. The revivalists and fundamentalist organizations went even to the extent of charging Tendulkar of “anti-Brahmanism.”

If *Ghashiram Kotwal* has been treated by some conservatives as an attack on Brahmin community, *Kanyadaan* has been described as an attack on left wing ideology. Nutan Gosavi in her “*Kanyadaan: An Exposé of Political Progressives*” asserts that Tendulkar wrote this play as a satire on “political progressives with socialist leanings” to answer the challenge of the orthodox Poona brahmins “to write a similar play on the other sections of society.” Her assertion here suggests that the critic hasn’t been able to appreciate Tendulkar’s objectivity in dealing with social and political realities without any leaning of his own towards this or that side of the political spectrum. In her interpretation of the play as an exposure of hypocrisy and naiveté of left wing socialists, she tends to take a blinkered view of the complexity of issues Tendulkar dramatizes by his treatment of the theme of inter-caste marriage. For example, she declares that Tendulkar completely demolishes the school of thought that regards “man as innately good and violence as merely a matter of environment modifiable with the change in circumstances.” In pursuing this line of argument, Nutan completely ignores the socio-historical context which is so essential for our understanding of the behaviour of all the characters in the play. The power of the play lies not only in the way it presents violence as an integral aspect of human nature but
also in the way it is consistent with the realities of caste and class in Indian society, passing through a phase of transition in this respect. Because of her exclusive concern with Tendulkar’s attack on socialist ideology, she tends to oversimplify characters, the causes of their behaviour and their responses to the situations. Multidimensional element of conflict in the play, too, thus goes unappreciated by the critic.

If Nutan Gosavi’s study places the play in relation to the inherent nature of man, neglecting thereby the significance of socio-historic factors, Wadikar goes to the other extreme and examines the play in the light of caste relations and tensions in Indian society. Shailja B. Wadikar gives a critical overview of the story of the play and discusses characters, their attitudes and behaviours solely in the context of caste relations in Indian society. She categorically states that Arun is a “spokesman of the angry young generation among the Dalits of the post-1970 India.” Her whole argument suggests that the play is an expression of the frustration of the dalits oppressed for centuries in this country. A critical look, however, shows that Wadikar, like a large number of other critics, succumbs to the tendency of over generalizations and simplifications. She, for instance, doesn’t recognize the fact that Tendulkar, though unsparing in exposing social oppression, has rendered characters like Arun employing as much of irony as he does in delineating the character of Nath. Moreover, Tendulkar has placed the Indian caste system with its resultant frustrations and violence in relation to fundamental human nature, something which Wadikar has completely ignored.

Anita Myles has examined his plays with an exclusive focus on the theme of power and violence in his plays. She rightly finds this theme running through all of his major plays and concludes that “Tendulkar appears preoccupied with this syndrome of power and violence.” Her whole endeavour in the essay remains confined to bringing out how “institutionalized power” causing violence manifests itself in social structures and human relationships. She certainly succeeds in giving a critical summary of different plays from this perspective but leaves unsatisfied the audience or reader’s curiosity for deeper insights into the psychological, social, biological and economic causes. Moreover, in the absence of any reference to certain different and subtle means used for attaining and maintaining power by individuals and groups, the whole study looks somewhat simplistic. Without any discussion of responses, strategies or approaches used to counter coercive authorities, the study remains strikingly deficient in depths and details. This trend of placing violence in human relationship within the broader paradigm of struggle for
power also constitutes the focus of Dr. Ram Sharma’s article “The Trial between the Humanists and the Anti-Humanists in Vijay Tendulkar’s Play Silence! The Court is in Session.” Here, he touches upon the basic tendency of human nature to “fight for authority and power” in human relationships. He describes it as a “play based on the theme of power, its sources and manifestations” but nowhere does he talk about the sources of power or its different forms of manifestations. The dynamics of power, violence and the way they influence and are responded to by different individuals depending upon their place and position in society as well as their psychological make-up find no place in his discussion. He even uses the terms humanist and anti-humanist in a rather vague and casual manner, failing therefore in exploring the play in its full depths and dimensions even from this perspective.

Tendulkar’s plays, it is evident, certainly deal with the all important question of human tendency to gain power and dominate others. He even ventures to deal in Encounter in Umbugland with the ruthless struggle for political power and the ways and means, even the most unscrupulous ones, employed to excise and maintain it. This play has been described by Tendulkar’s critics as a political allegory. For example, Vijaya Mardhekar in her essay, “Encounter in Umbugland: A Play of Power-Politics,” aims at discussing the play as “a scathing satire on the contemporary political scene” reminiscent of the “tug-of-war” in Indian politics in the 1960s after the death of Nehru. She dwells at some length on the struggle for power and what it does to Vijaya and the Ministers as human beings. Her critical look, however, doesn’t take into account Tendulkar’s depiction of the common man used as pawns by these players in the game of power. No note is taken by her of how Tendulkar shows these politicians instigating violence for their vested interests. The vulnerability of uncomprehending, unsuspecting poor masses to manipulations by Machiavellian politicians has also gone totally unnoticed by the critic.

Apart from reading Tendulkar’s plays from politico-cultural and sociological perspectives, many critics have viewed and studied his plays using psychoanalytical approach, attempting thereby to dissect the inner recesses, tensions and conflicts in the behaviour and attitudes of his characters. In this context, articles by N.S. Dharan, Indulekha Roy Burman, V.M. Madge and Shanta Gokhale can be regarded as deserving some critical observations.

N.S. Dharan’s article “Sakharam Binder: The Impotent Fury of a Male Masochist” draws the readers’ attention with the promise of profound and enlightening insights into the depths of
Sakharam’s psyche, shedding light on the nature and causes of violence dramatized in the play. But what, in fact, the critic gives us is a brief and simple critical summary of the play in an easy and lucid style without any discernable analysis of the element of masochism in Sakharam’s behaviour. It is only in the character of Champa’s husband that Dharan points out the presence of masochistic tendencies when he observes that Fauzdar Shinde “a masochist himself, comes to Sakharam’s residence, fully drunk, begging her to kill him.” One feels that Dharan hasn’t tried to probe the intricacies in the behavioural patterns in Tendulkar’s men and women in the play and has, in fact, overlooked almost all the social, economic and cultural factors colluding with natural human instincts and impulses which have shaped their psychological inclinations and responses. That is why, the complex relationship between the feelings of pain and pleasure, violence and love, hatred and sympathy, receives little attention from the scholar.

Using the same approach, Indulekha Roy Burman in her article, “Man-Woman Relationship in the Sakharam Binder,” sees this play as a “fascinating study of the relationship between man and woman” and tries to probe into the mind and psyche of the major characters like Sakharam, Laxmi and Champa and analyses the “two polarities of feminine response” towards the “sensual patriarch.” Though she sounds convincing in delineating Laxmi’s character which “oozes the eternal ‘oomph’ of a traditional Indian woman with her god–fearing, religious, docile nature,” but she overlooks the complexities in the character and mind of Champa, whom she describes as “a boiling cauldron of fierce revolt that guts down all the men around her, irrespective of her protector or annihilator.” She also doesn’t pay attention to the causes behind Sakharam’s violent behaviour, failing in this way to hint at the art of Tendulkar in making even such a sensual and ruthless man look so humanly real. Moreover, her assertions that Sakharam’s “working class secularism is exploded… when Champa shares her bed with Dawood, a Muslim” is not, it appears, supported by any textual evidence. The play suggests that it is not the consciousness of his woman sharing bed with a muslim but his hurt and challenged masculine sexual ego which incites his jealousy and impotent rage.

Another psychological study of the character of Sakharam is made by V.M. Madge, who has attempted to examine Sakharam Binder “as an unwitting deconstruction of the self.” The critic goes on to assert that there are contradictions and confusions in ideology and vision of the protagonist and Tendulkar himself. He analyses the incoherence in the response of Sakharam, who initially appears as a social rebel with an ideological moral radicalism and then ultimately
“dwindles into conformism and orthodoxy when he comes into contact with one more radical than himself.”

This, according to Madge, indicates that there is confusion in what the playwright intends to convey: “Whether in him Tendulkar has shown us the triumph of socio-moral radicalism … the inevitable tragedy of such a stance in life, or, simply a sensational story aimed at shocking the ever fragile middle-class sensibilities.”

Madge’s conclusions and assertions, it appears, are a result of his search for some ideology in the play, ignoring the fact that Tendulkar’s theatre defies all efforts at reducing his art and vision to any doctrine, philosophy, theory or formula. He, in fact, is wedded to the aim of dramatizing reality as he finds and understands it. He, therefore, presents aspects of human nature in its varied forms and complexities. This is also made explicit by the playwright himself when he observes: “My characters are much complex…. This complexity itself becomes a problem as it makes them difficult to understand. But I can’t forget or leave out the inner contradiction when I develop a character.”

The failure of Madge in appreciating this complexity in the character and behaviour of Tendulkar’s characters is further evident when he accuses him of being “blinded by desire to shock.” He seems to be completely unappreciative of Tendulkar’s commitment to presenting “life in the ‘raw’ sans sugar coating.” If readers feel shocked by what he has presented, it is, to quote Tendulkar once again, is “because of their ignorance. They are not even aware of what is happening around them or they don’t see anything wrong in themselves.”

Shanta Gokhale, an eminent critic on Tendulkar’s plays, has given a very incisive and objective critical analysis of some of the important aspects of his theatre in her article, “Tendulkar on his own Terms.” She approaches “Tendulkar’s work through his characters” and due to a unique position of his women in society, regards them as the “columns and beams on which he builds his structures” and reveals his social conscience. She makes an insightful psychological study of his women characters who are, according to her, “quite different from each other in behavioural traits, class and character; but underneath these superficial differences lie lives that resemble each other in the ultimate truth of being commanded by men, for their pleasure and under their laws.”

She thinks that their behavioural traits are different in respect of their different responses towards somewhat similar situations at psychological levels. Though Gokhale offers a useful psychological analysis of the lives of his women in the context of their social environs, she treats his male figures only as constituting this milieu, thus locating them
“more in sociology than in psychology.” It is here that her discussion appears to become a bit lopsided as the study of Tendulkar’s male characters can be equally interesting and illuminating when they are comprehended in terms of their socio-psychological behaviour. It is also significant to note that the male characters, she has chosen to study, figure mainly in Tendulkar’s early plays, whereas women she has discussed appear in his later works. That’s why such important male characters as Sakharam, Jaisingh, Ghashiram, Arun, Nath and Kashikar do not come up for any serious or incisive analysis at her hands.

Besides themes and concerns, Tendulkar’s art as a dramatist has also been talked about by some of his critics. One finds that most of the observations and comments in this regard are scanty and scattered over different articles. Moreover, they are available mainly in the form of some broad generalizations made without a detailed analysis of the textual illustrations. But critics like A.N. Prasad, Shirish Chindhade, Anju Bala Agarwal, N.S. Dharan and Santosh Chakarbarti have devoted some of their articles exclusively to the question of technique in his plays.

A.N. Prasad uses purely an aesthetic approach to Ghashiram Kotwal in his article “Ghashiram Kotwal: A Play of Technical Perfection” and asserts that themes and message “have a very little role in the realm of art and beauty.” Following this dictum, he goes on to praise Tendulkar for deliberately charging “the play with the voltage of music, song and dance” making some passing comparisons with the use of music by Shakespeare. He also makes some perceptive comments about the use of imagery and symbolism in this play with the purpose of highlighting their contribution to the formal perfection of the play. Prasad’s effort, of course, deserves recognition for its brevity, clarity and pointedness, but it appears to be a rather incomplete account of the technical dexterity visible in the play. The way theme is projected through the technique is something that he has deliberately excluded from the scope of his article. Even the importance of spectacle does not get any place in the scheme of his discussion. It appears that Prasad has subjected the analysis of technique in Ghashiram Kotwal to some of his preconceived framework of critical attitudes, resulting in giving the reader an assessment which doesn’t sound holistic.

Contrary to Prasad, Shirish Chindhade in his article “Ghashiram Kotwal: The Play is the Thing” attempts to critique Tendulkar’s style and technique in relation to the theme, message and historicity of the play. Making some strong and direct statements of condemnation, Chindhade
accuses the playwright of offering us a “pure and simple skullduggery, spicy entertainment, acrimonious persiflage and venomous maligning of a certain heroic figure in Marathi history and of a certain section of Poona Brahmin society” and thus using history as “only a handmaid to embellish a music-dance-mime show.” According to him, “Thematic core sometimes remains hollow in Tendulkar’s treatment as the emphasis falls on the spectacle.” When examined closely the tone and tenor of Chindhade in his article clearly conveys the idea that his criticism is a bit too stinging and blinkered. It seems to be, therefore, deficient in objectivity and balance. Some of the larger issues such as violence, human nature, society and politics and how Tendulkar presents them in the aesthetic form of drama find no place leaving therefore significant gaps in his study.

Almost similar views are heard from critics like Anju Bala Agarwal as well. She too believes that Tendulkar “regards form more important than character, situation and theme.” According to her, “Some of his plays are written in the conventional drawing room naturalistic or melo-dramatic mode…. She also asserts that “Kamala and Kanyadaan aim to be naturalistic but are flawed in execution,” a serious charge which she, to our disappointment, does not substantiate with necessary evidences from the texts of the plays. In the course of her discussion she touches upon some aspects of Tendulkar’s art and technique as well as his themes and concerns in his different plays. Her whole essay, however, appears to offer no penetrative and detailed analysis of any of the stylistic and technical devices used by Tendulkar. Her whole effort in this way looks to be a simple critical account of some of Tendulkar’s concerns and techniques in his plays, giving no comprehensive critical account of his art and mind from any particular perspective.

Though critics, whether writing on Tendulkar’s plays from the point of view of gender, caste and class, post-colonialism or even dramatic technique, have something to say from their standpoint something about Tendulkar’s treatment of violence in his plays, but there are scholars who have studied his theatre with a special focus on the theme of violence and place him even in the tradition of ‘Theatre of Cruelty.’ Names of C. Coelho, P. Pramila Devi, Geeta Kumar and P. Obula Reddy are among those who have devoted their attention almost exclusively to this aspect of the playwright's concerns. They have certainly dealt with what is perhaps the single most important element that has deeply influenced Tendulkar’s treatment of life as an artist. But all these studies, too, are in the form of short articles and therefore remain severely
limited in their scope, providing only passing comments and observations on one or the other of his plays.

C. Coelho is probably the first critic who has considered Tendulkar’s art using Antonin Artaud’s concept of ‘Theatre of Cruelty.’ Like Artaud who believed that “unblinking perceptions of the world’s inherent cruelty must be given a new art form,” Tendulkar too, according to Coelho, was disillusioned with modern theatre and life around and thus broke through the traditional and conventional theatre, making “an extreme excursion into a new kind of theatre experience” like Fugard. He further observes that all of the writers like Ionesco and Beckett, Weiss and Bond, Fugard and Tendulkar “at some time or other dispense with coherent language or the framework of an ordered and comprehensible world in their plays.” He concludes with a feeling that Tendulkar’s “primary concern in plays like Sakharam Binder, The Vultures or in Ghashiram Kotwal and Silence! The Court is in Session is the failure of human relations due to man’s inherent cruelty to his fellowmen.”

Coelho has, thus, drawn attention to a very important area of Tendulkar’s concerns, but in the very small space of a page or so devoted to Tendulkar, the critic has been able to provide only a few passing observations about his theatre. The result is that none of the plays comes up for any detailed analysis of any of the thematic, stylistic and technical features of his theatre.

Taking clues from Coelho, Mrs. P. Pramila Devi has tried to use concepts of Artaud in her interpretation of Kamala. Borrowing the idea from Artaud that “there is cruelty in the heart of man” and that “even though man is a civilized being now, there is still the savageness of primitive man in him,” she explains Jaisingh’s cruelty towards Kamala and Sarita. But Jaisingh too, she feels, in his turn “is a slave to his employer,” who sacks him under pressures and threats from those in power. She, thus, concludes that “man is either a slave to others or an oppressor of others in this world.”

The essay shows that Pramila’s application of the concept of ‘Theatre of Cruelty’ remains very severely restricted as she spares her critical attention neither for the complexity and growth in the response of Sarita to her predicament nor does she bring questions of the aesthetics of this type of theatre under her consideration.

Different from P. Pramila Devi is the approach of Geeta Kumar whose article, “Theatre of Cruelty and Ghashiram Kotwal,” is devoted to a discussion of aesthetic aspects of Tendulkar’s art in this play. According to Geeta, “Artaud proposed a theatre where music, dance, mime,
pantomime, gestures, chantings and incantations are more important...”\(^94\) She underlines similarities between Artaud’s theatre and that of Tendulkar by analyzing at some length the searing impact of such spectacles in *Ghashiram Kotwal*. She presses her argument further and says that in the manner of Artaud’s theatre Tendulkar’s *Ghasiram Kotwal* “is not a play where dialogues are too important, rather it is the visuals that dazzle the spectator.”\(^95\) Moreover, for her the incident and the multitude are more important than the character of Ghashiram, whose impact gets diluted in comparison to the sounds and visuals.

Her article, though quite illuminating in some ways, is characterized by a bit of imbalance because of her tendency to force her discussion of the play strictly in the mould of Artaud’s principles of ‘Theatre of Cruelty.’ No doubt, music, dance and other spectacles do play a significant role in impacting the senses of the audience, the importance of dialogues in revealing the subtle nuances in the behavioural patterns of Ghashiram cannot be overlooked. The play’s total effect after all depends upon a synthesis of all the different elements – theme, characters, spectacle, music and language etc.

It is evident from the foregoing survey of representative works of criticism available so far on Tendulkar’s plays that they have attracted a huge response from his readers and audience who appear divided in their interpretations and assessments. This is mainly because they have tended to concentrate on one or the other area of Tendulkar’s themes and art without taking a holistic and organic view of the life and world he has projected. Although all these critics using feministic, post-colonial, sociological and psychological approaches along with those who have shed light on style and techniques, have added in one way or the other something to our knowledge and understanding of Tendulkar’s oeuvre. What we, however, fail to achieve is an in-depth and comprehensive view and insight into his mind and art.

These limitations can be attributed to the fact that the central concern of Tendulkar with the reality of violence ingrained in human nature, relationships and our social, political and cultural structures has not received a detailed and incisively analytical treatment at the hands of his critics. None of the critics, it is clear, has devoted his/her study to multiple forms and manifestations of violence in various situations depicted in his plays. Even different ways his characters adopt to negotiate the forces and experiences of violence hasn’t found any place in this huge body of critical studies. The variety of sources and factors motivating his men and women to indulge in violence, too, have escaped the penetrative insights of even the most
scholarly and analytical of his scholars. There appears to be hardly any study revealing in detail and depth how Tendulkar has transformed a subject like violence and cruelty even in their brutal forms into works of drama with such powerful and hypnotizing aesthetic effects. All these limitations, imbalances and gaps in existing studies on Tendulkar therefore necessitate a comprehensive examination of the theme of violence and its aestheticization in its different dimensions and depths. But before an attempt is made to explore and establish the viability of examining this aspect of Tendulkar’s oeuvre, it appears to be in place here to explain briefly the broad meaning and sense in which the terms ‘Violence’ and ‘Aesthetics’ have been used in this study.

The term ‘Violence’ appears to be a bit ambiguous and therefore not very easy to define or categorize. This has resulted in a good deal of discussions and debates among psychologists, sociologists, philosophers and other scholars of different hues.

Violence is most often seen in physical and intentional terms. It, according to N.Walker, “involves the bodies of both perpetrator and victim and it may thus be defined as a bodily response with the intended infliction of bodily harm on another person.” Adding to it the dimension of ‘abuse,’ Britannica Encyclopedia defines violence as “an exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse.” It is described in a bit wider sense in the Encyclopedia of Psychology, according to which, violence signifies “the use of unjustified physical force with the intention to injure or damage.” If all these definitions tend to describe violence mainly in terms of physical force or action, Imbush adds to it psychological dimensions as well. He feels that violence is not only perpetrated in physical form but is also expressed as it is also based on “words, gestures, pictures, symbols or deprivation of the necessities of life so as to force others into subjugation through intimidation and fear, or specific ‘rewards.’”

Shifting the focus to the aspect of violation of social legitimacy, J. Archer and K. Browne, socio-psychologists, opine that violence refers to “physically damaging assaults which are not socially legitimized in any way.” Further expanding and clarifying the socio-psychological dimensions of violence, Albert J. Reiss and Jeffrey A. Roth have described it as a “behavior by persons against persons that intentionally threatens, attempts, or actually inflicts physical harm.” Giving it a more comprehensive meaning Siegfried Lamnek describes violence as “a completed action, which is personal, individual, direct, expressive or instrumental, predominantly physical, illegal and also illegitimate, and also intentional.” But this definition,
too, doesn’t take into account the violence of impersonal or collective nature and does not refer to acts of violence directed against one’s own self as well. Frederic W. Ilfeld includes these aspects and views violence as “an act of intense, willful, physical harm committed by an individual or a group against himself or another individual or group.”

This idea of impersonal and collective violence against individuals or groups is further expanded by thinkers like Foucault and Waldmann, who view it as an act or expression of power and thus something built into the systems. P. Waldmann gives to it the name of ‘institutional violence’ and describes it as the “power of disposition over subjects and dependents granted to holders of positions within a hierarchy and supported by physical sanctions.” It’s most obvious example is visible in the form of state’s claim to sovereignty and its assertions. Foucault, too, sees violence as something integral to institutions in modern times and finds its manifestations in the ways institutions control irregularities and suppress differences such as those of sexuality and pushes those who are different to the margins of society.

This concept of systemic violence is applied to economic, social, cultural and political structures by Johan Galtung, a Ghandian philosopher and European theorist. He defines violence as “avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs; the impairment of human life, which lowers the actual degree to which someone is able to meet their needs below that which would otherwise be possible.” Elaborating the concept he says that violence can be psychological as well as physical. It can include “indoctrination, threats and the unequal distribution of resources (thereby increasing individual isolation and loneliness).” Systemic violence, thus, can also work as a cause of violence in individual’s behaviour.

Besides these thinkers and scholars, World Health Organisation (2002) has also adopted a definition of violence which appears to be more inclusive and comprehensive. According to WHO, violence is “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation.”

This definition comes to be accepted by a vast majority of people and institutions, including our own Indian Government. ‘The Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005,’ for example, says that “any act, omission or commission or conduct” of the victimizer “shall constitute domestic violence in case it harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb
or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse.”

It is evident that all these definitions hint at or emphasize, with varying focus, different features of violence, its sources, causes, manifestations, aims and victims along with a wide range of consequences. They, however, do help us to identify and crystallize the important features and dimensions of the phenomenon of violence more precisely as it has been dealt with in the present study. The sense in which this term has been used here to examine Tendulkar’s treatment of this theme can broadly be defined as violence – physical, psychological, sexual and verbal – perpetrated or expressed through actions, gestures, words, images and signs etc. by individuals, groups or systems with the aim – conscious or unconscious, overt or covert – of inflicting harm, hurt, injury or destruction on the body or soul of the victim. It may be seen both as directed against others as well as against one’s own self.

Another term which needs some broad definition and explanation of the sense in which it has been used in this thesis is that of ‘Aesthetics’. This term, too, is one of the most widely discussed, analyzed and theorized terms among philosophers, theorists and literary critics since the times of Plato and Aristotle. Since it has not been used in the study in any of its limited or reductive significations, only broad outlines of the meaning it conveys may serve the purpose here.

The word ‘aesthetic’ has its roots in the Greek verb *aesthanesthai*, meaning ‘to perceive.’ It is therefore a widely used term in connection with the philosophy of perception. It signifies in this philosophy, “new ways of seeing and of perceiving the world,” as it is done not only by the philosophers but the artists as well. It has also been widely discussed and debated by thinkers and theorists using psychological approach “which examines the perception, origins and effects of beauty.” It thus comes to be closely related to the phenomenon of beauty, its meaning, source as well as the ways of seeing and perceiving it.

For many writers of the 18th century, philosophy of beauty meant ‘Criticism’ which still retained its meaning in 19th century as “reasoned appreciation of works of art.” According to Santayana, “Criticism implies judgment and aesthetic perception.” He goes further and widens the concept of aesthetics by combining it with criticism and argues that when we combine them “we shall unite two essential qualities of the theory of beauty.” He thus propagates a wider notion of aesthetics which signifies “critical or appreciative perception.” In this way, the use
of the term aesthetics in literary studies comes to signify “critical reflection on art, culture and nature.” It suggests an integrated or a holistic critical perception of the organically fused or combined elements of content and form in objects of beauty such as works of art. Thus the meaning of the term aesthetics widens and implies “the study of the feelings, concepts, and judgments arising from our appreciation of the arts or of the wider class of objects considered moving, or beautiful or sublime.”

The idea of aesthetics, as critical reflection gets further clarified and specifically emphasized in the definition provided in Columbia Encyclopedia, according to which, it is the “branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of art and the criteria of artistic judgment.” Here the criteria of judgment – principles of analyzing, evaluating and judging a work of art – acquires importance in one’s appreciation of the merits of a work of aesthetic quality. Some of the important meanings associated with this term, as it is used in critical literary studies, have been underlined in Encyclopedia Concise Britannica, which defines it as: “Philosophical study of the qualities that make something an object of aesthetic interest and of the nature of aesthetic value and judgment. It encompasses the philosophy of art, which is chiefly concerned with the nature and value of art and the principles by which it should be interpreted and evaluated.”

Broadening the meaning and scope of aesthetics, earlier confined mainly to debate over the concept of beauty, twentieth century writers like Eli Siegel inaugurated the philosophy of Aesthetic Realism. According to him, “The world, art and self explain each other: each is the aesthetic oneness of opposites.” This trend of questioning specific nature of aesthetics and the reductionist views of art has developed further in the hands of Marxist critics. Terry Eagleton’s The Ideology of the Aesthetic, for example, is an attempt at deconstructing the concept of aesthetics. He rejects what were considered to be its irreducible and universal characteristics and emphasizes that they should be studied in relation to context. He explores in this book the ideological and historical roots and variations of aesthetics. It suggests that “we can never talk about ‘Literature’ as if it were a fixed canon of works, as specific set of devices, or an unchanging body of forms and genres. To endow an object or artifact with the dignity of aesthetic value is a social act, ultimately inseparable from prevailing ideologies.” From this perspective, “art and literature are not eternal verities but are always open to new definitions.” They exist in a dynamic relationship with their contexts – historical, social or cultural. In recent
times, therefore, aesthetics has come to be studied in combination with various cognitive and psychological sciences, concepts and theories such as theory of evolution (Evolutionary aesthetics), cultural objects (Applied aesthetics) and human conduct and behavior (Aesthetic ethics).

The idea that aesthetics has close relationship with social, historical and cultural realities is further borne out by the fact that ancient Indian concept of aesthetics has its own distinctive characteristics reflective of the unique Indian mind, values and sensibility. The value based concept of ‘Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram,’ a cornerstone of Indian aesthetics, reveals its rootedness in the typical Indian ethos. *Natyashastra*,\(^{123}\) regarded as the ‘Fifth Veda,’ also emphasizes that the element of promoting good is an essential element of the art of drama described as “suitable for the degenerate age as the best form of religious instruction.”\(^{124}\)

Besides the element of instruction, the concepts of ‘Bhava’ (The state of mind) and ‘Rasa’ (Emotional flavour/essence) also occupy a special place of importance in Indian aesthetics. Rasa, aesthetic delight or bliss, is like an enjoyment of “flavours that arise from the proper preparation of ingredients and the quality of ingredients.”\(^{125}\) Here the effect of drama – education as well as pleasure and delight of various kinds – is accorded the highest importance in aesthetic constructions. But equal significance is attached to the quality of ingredients and the art of preparing the work that is drama. Thus, not only the audience or reader but also the art of producing works of aesthetic value with proper mixing and skillful use of the ingredients like spectacle, music, gestures, language, incidents, characters, costumes etc. are important in evaluating such works of art.

It is amply evident from this brief discussion of the concept of aesthetics that though all these approaches have something important to say, none of them can serve as the universal and absolute touchstone in interpreting and evaluating the aesthetic worth and value of all the works of art produced in such diverse situations by writers, so distinct and different from each other for an endless variety of readers and audiences. However, there are certain aspects which emerge as important, deserving due consideration in ones effort to appreciate the aesthetic expression of themes and concerns by writers with special reference to their world view, intent, the use of style and techniques and structure and form created to achieve the desired effect. For example, the plays of Tendulkar can be appreciated by analyzing how he arouses the interests of his readers and spectators and engages them at different levels of their imaginative, emotional, intellectual
and moral being and thus provides them with the experience of pleasure peculiar to his theatre. This also brings into focus his skills as a dramatist in using such tools as language, gestures, imagery, symbols, visual effects, stage directions, incidents, dialogues and music which make his plays unique. An analysis of his art of characterization, selection, arrangement and presentation of incidents and episodes, and how well all of these elements are blended into an indivisible and organic whole producing a unified total effect, also becomes important in this context.

Since a writer’s perspective serves as a principle of selection and organization of content and form and infuses them with meaning and aesthetic effect, an investigation into the writer’s view and vision of life, his knowledge and understanding of human nature and condition as well as the realities of the world around him, also acquire crucial importance in such attempts. This also makes it necessary to study how successfully all these different aspects or components are mutually equilibrated, winning for the work a general and permanent recognition. But before going ahead with a discussion about how and what of Tendulkar’s treatment of violence in an aesthetically effective manner, it appears to be relevant here to try to understand why he has chosen this aspect of reality in his plays. A brief critical look, therefore, at his life, milieu and readings and other influences which shaped his mind and art can be useful here. This is also supported by Tendulkar’s own statement that he has been expressing himself through his works: “My work has come from within… an outcome of my observation of the world in which I live.”

Tendulkar was born in a lower middle class Saraswat Brahmin family in Kandevadi, a small lane in Girgaon, Mumbai. He inherited love of literature particularly of drama from his father who was “an enthusiastic writer, director and actor of amateur plays” in Marathi. Tendulkar himself tells in an interview: “The atmosphere at home was devoted to literature and the theatre.” His father ran a small-time publishing business besides being a clerk at a British publishing firm. His house was full of books and his father encouraged him to read. From the time he was only four, he was taken by his father to see plays which fascinated him. As a boy in school, he also developed keen interest in western movies and acquired “a photographic memory.” Though not good at formal education, he had done a good amount of reading before he took up his job as a journalist.

Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller were among the western writers who influenced the young mind of Tendulkar. He tells that among the Marathi writers Dinkar Balkrishan
Mokashi and Vishnu Vinayak Bokil impressed him and became his role models. He praises Mokashi for his Spartan lifestyle, personality and informality of his writing. Bokil struck him by writing “what others would not have written at all.” He was also the “first to write Marathi as it was spoken in everyday life.” Influence of these writers and their personality must have seeped into the receptive and ever absorbing mind of Tendulkar.

Besides being a voracious reader of good books, he gave clear evidences of the budding writer in him. He was only six when he first wrote his essays and stories and then at the age of eleven he wrote, directed and acted in his first play in Kolhapur school. But when he was a loner and had left school for good, his writings became his only outlet for his emotions. He wrote poems, stories and even film-scripts which were, in fact, entirely for himself.

Besides the influences which stimulated his creative talent, some other factors in his early experiences also played a crucial role in deciding the contents and direction of his fertile genius. The life and personalities of the members of his family, of course, went a long way in moulding his interests and outlook. His parents were persons of clarity and firmness of convictions and attitudes. Though his mother had received only primary education, she was a brave and courageous lady who “read, thought and developed a lot through life.” His father was “a strict disciplinarian,” “hot-tempered man” and “honest-to-the-roots,” who refused to make his daughter “a show piece and pay a dowry” to get her married. Tendulkar’s own tendency to stand by his values and conscience even in the face of social pressures is something that he seems to have inherited from his parents. The fact that he had uncles on mother’s side, with streaks of psychological abnormalities, led him “to develop a liking for cranks and madmen.” This, perhaps, combined with the plight of his elder sister who died a spinster, produced in him empathy for the weak and the marginalized.

His elder brother, Raghunath, too, left a deep and permanent mark on his mind. In his own words, “It was he who brought the fiery spirit of nationalism into our house.” Though when they grew older their temperaments clashed, Raghunath loved him deeply. Tendulkar could never overcome the loss of his brother, who had died a violent death, having been abandoned by his family for his alcoholism and what the family considered his erratic and deviant ways. The indulgence of his brother in violent and aggressive activities and even beating young Vijay at times “black and blue” for trying to dissuade him from his addiction, provided the latter
sympathetic insights into the violent behaviours of people. Violence for Tendulkar, thus, also became “associated with overwhelming affection.”

Again, it was his elder brother who first took him to the liquor dens, where he saw “the very dregs of society froth up to the surface.” That is how his search began: “What I was looking for was there. I began looking into people, scratching the surface, particularly when they appeared proper clean and pious. I found the same thing in them. Once I saw this, it entered my plays in different ways.”

Even as a child he felt fascinated by scenes of violence. He recalls how he had seen from the balcony of his house incidents of communal riots and stabbing: “They did not frighten me…. I was excited by the spectacle.” He often felt strongly attracted by spectacles of might and ferocity and even macabre scenes didn’t scare or repel him. He found that “middle class life is full of don’ts … not interested in adventures, in madness.” But his reaction to the don’ts as he tells was that when he was told not to do something, he did it. This showed the man Tendulkar was going to be as a writer, dealing with issues traditionally considered tabooed, and that too in a manner which sometimes shocked the middle class sensibility.

His interest in the life of common man and their issues was further intensified by his experiences at Kolhapur, Pune and during his stay at Mumbai ‘Chawls’ and became a life long concern in his obsessive effort “to capture human behaviour, elusive and ever-changing.” The world of pain and sorrow which he has depicted is a reflection of the real world which he had seen and known. In his own words, “I am from a middle class family and I have seen the brutal ways of life by keeping my eyes open.” He acquired a deep understanding of the world of poverty, the lives, aspirations and frustrations of the lower middle class during his stay in Mumbai chawls. His abilities to empathize with all sorts of people, even the criminals, coupled with the faculty of sharp and clinical observation and analysis led him to understand and expose the contradictions, tensions and violence latent in modern life. He discovered through his exposure to realities of urban life in cities like Bombay that the entire social cultural and economic milieu was structured on power relationships in which the stronger exploited and oppressed the weaker. Though not committed to any particular ideology, he respected Marxism and saw violence in modern city life also in relation to the capitalist ethos of ruthless competition and pursuit of personal interests. He came to believe that the thin veneer of culture peels off and the animal in man comes out in the face of provocation and hostile circumstances.
As a sensitive and observant individual he realized that the world he lived in was full of conflicts and violence. Partition of India, imposition of emergency, militancy in Punjab, Kashmir and many other parts of the country, naxal violence, Gujarat and Bombay communal riots and vandalism of Shiv Sena were the harsh realities of his times which revealed to him how easily in face of provocation and fears the beast buried in man breaks free and begins to run amuck. He felt, “an individual’s biggest fear today is that of being reduced to a non-entity…. Ranged against forces that are beyond his comprehension and control – such as the state, the bureaucracy and the pressures of the system – an individual finds himself utterly helpless and, out of sheer desperation, huddles in groups and mob.”

This sets the stage for politicians to play on “their collective fears – real or imaginary” for their political gains. He saw that not only the national but the international scenario of modern times was stalked by the specter of violence and terrorism. Wars like the one in Vietnam, civil strife in Somalia, bloodshed and destruction in Bosnia and in some of the Latin American countries are only a few examples of the violence which gripped life all over the world. This phenomenon of violence in its various forms and manifestations with its variety of causes and consequences has always been the subject of Tendulkar’s study. He made a penetrative and extensive study of violence as a subject of his project “An Inquiry into the Pattern of Growing Violence in Society and its Relevance to Contemporary Theatre” under Nehru Fellowship. In this connection, he went around the country, trying to explore and understand the situations ranging from individual to public and political violence, interviewing criminals, policemen and jail authorities. He visited even the remote tribal areas, trying to know the life of people on the farthest margins of society. This study only further stimulated his “curiosity about violence – not as something that exists in isolation, but as a part of the human milieu, human behavior, human mind.”

It is this curiosity to discover, understand and reveal the nature of violence, its forms, sources and effects that is manifested in his creative works as well, particularly the plays of his later and mature writing career.

Though as a social being, he was against all exploitation and violence but as a writer, he admits, “I feel fascinated by the violent exploited-exploiter relationship and obsessively delve deep into it instead of taking a position against it.” This clearly testifies to the importance and necessity of examining in detail Tendulkar’s treatment of this theme in order to understand not only his view and vision of life but also his art of giving it an aesthetic expression in his plays.
A critical look at his major plays shows that the theme of violence is central to all of them and serves to bind them into a kind of unified body. He deals with this phenomenon as he sees it in different sections of society – rich and poor, old and young, men and women, educated or uneducated, castes on the upper as well as lower rungs of the social hierarchy. His searching gaze has explored and exposed its manifestations in different areas of one’s life – personal, familial, professional, social, cultural and political. Depiction of violence by Tendulkar as something ubiquitous can be seen perpetrated or expressed broadly in the forms of physical, sexual, psychological and verbal forms in different domains of human relationships. However, all the different types of violence often intersect and also combine with each other to form a complex set of tactics to harm the victimizer.

Physical violence is perhaps the most obvious and visible form, perpetrated through the use of physical force in order to inflict pain or injury on the body of the victim. Physical force may be exercised in the form of beating, pushing, shoving and hitting with blows, kicks, slaps or with weapon. Physical violence like any other form is also associated with the question of power. Those who possess superior physical force or occupy places and positions of power employ it as a means to force the weak and the inferior into obedience and subservience to their will and authority. This may also be used by the perpetrator to assert his perceived loss of mastery and prestige. It often reflects his anger, frustration and despair resulting from his actual or perceived failures.

Tendulkar has depicted this form of violence so boldly and frankly that it sometimes has shocked his conventional audience who are not prepared to accept this ugly reality. Sakharam Binder, the eponymous protagonist, is an example of how men use brutal force against women in different ways. He beats Laxmi, his sixth woman, black and blue with blows, kicks, slaps or with belt and even strangles Champa to death. *The Vultures* has a number of scenes which have been found disturbing for the physical violence they depict. Here, Ramakant and Umakant, while feigning a fight among themselves, push their father off the chair, hurting his head. They scare him by throwing bottles of liquor on each other and rudely shock the audience by the way they break the leg of their sister Manik.

*Ghashiram Kotwal*, too, has a number of scenes depicting gory violence. The way Ghashiram is himself beaten up first by the ‘thugs’ at Gulabi’s place and then again at dakshina ceremony by soldiers introduces the element of brutal form of violence that dominates the whole
play. Ghashiram’s own use of violence, as a Kotwal, against Poonaites on the streets, particularly the ordeal of the innocent Brahmin, whose finger nails are pulled out and hands are burnt with red hot iron ball and then cut off, are truly scenes of gruesome physical atrocity. The violence of the mob in stoning Ghashiram to death marks the climatic point of the cruelty depicted in the play. However, there are a number of incidents of violence which are not shown on the stage but are reported or revealed to the audience through the dialogues, gestures and manners of characters or the use of such devices as sounds and lights. The beating of the gardener and abortion of Manik’s unborn child caused by Ramakant’s kick at her stomach in *The Vultures* are only some of many examples of such incidents of off-stage violence.

Allied to this is the form of sexual violence often directed against women. This form of violence, generally speaking, signifies sexual contact established or attempted without obtaining the consent or willingness of the other. It may be in the form of forced prostitution, rape, within or outside marriage, resulting in injury or violation of the body or dignity of the woman which may also result in unwanted and forced pregnancies and abortions. Molestations and harassment of women with words, gestures or insinuations of sexual overtones are also some of the other forms of its manifestations which Tendulkar has depicted in his plays one after the other.

His play *Sakharam Binder* reveals a specific psychopathic attitude of his male protagonist towards women, coupled with an erotic interest in coercive sexual behaviour. He, for instance, compulsively indulges in violently exploitative sexual orgies with his women. Shinde, in the same play, is a man who tries to force his wife, Champa, into whoring and thus violates her sense of honour. He is also the one who derives sadistic pleasure by sexually torturing his wife.

In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, Ghashiram’s act of giving his daughter, Gauri, to Nana Sahib in order to obtain power for himself and the way her unwanted pregnancy is aborted leading to her death are only some of the examples of sexual exploitation of women. The forced abortions of Rama and Manik in *The Vultures*, brutal beating and kicking of pregnant Jyoti by her husband, Arun in *Kanyadaan* and the verdict to Benare to abort her illegitimate child in *Silence! The Court is in Session* reveal how women become more vulnerable to sexual abuse during their pregnancies. Tendulkar’s gaze, however, is not limited to abuse only in heterosexual relationships but also explores and reveals it in relations generally considered abnormal and socially unacceptable. In *A Friend’s Story*, for instance, Mitra, driven by her irresistible
lesbian urge, becomes a kind of predator to Nama. When frustrated, she feels humiliated and resorts to violence against herself by committing suicide.

Tendulkar has brought on to the stage physical and sexual violence in their varied forms and shades as they are found in real life. He shows that physical and sexual acts of harming and hurting others are almost invariably accompanied by verbal assaults. Verbal abuse can prove to be very painful and virulent in the form of hurtful language, words of ridicule, verbal threats of abuse, harm or torture directed at the victim or at his/her family and friends. Cold and contemptuous tone, sarcasms, stinging comments, words of curse and angry outbursts are some of the common weapons used by the victimizer to hurt and humiliate the victim. Examples of verbal violence in its myriad forms can be noticed in almost every major play of Tendulkar.

In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Benare becomes the object of malicious and spiteful comments disguised as humour by her co-actors. They use searing and stinging words, sarcasms, snide remarks and belittling gestures, to denigrate her as a threat to public morality. In *Sakharam Binder*, Saktharam’s volley of swears, curses, abusive words and threats hit ruthlessly both of his women, Laxmi and Champa, almost all through the play. His foul mouth is in fact a potent weapon to intimidate, coerce and hurt these women into subservience to his lust and ego. *The Vultures* is among the plays which stand out for the use of highly shocking, abusive, coarse and vulgar language. Use of words like ‘crafty old swindler’ and ‘mangy-dog’ for father, ‘bitch,’ ‘whore’ and ‘slut’ for the sister and ‘bastard,’ ‘swine’ and ‘bloody pimp’ for each other has scandalized Tendulkar’s audience not only for their vulgarity and obscenity but also for the venom of hatred and violence they pour out. The language of Arun in *Kanyadaan* is sometimes so waspish that it sends Jyoti writhing with pain and cuts deep to the hearts of the members of her family.

Tendulkar shows that these forms of violence – physical, sexual and verbal cannot be separated from emotional and psychological implications. Psychological violence tends to have a very negative effect upon one’s mind and soul. It often appears when a person is made to experience fears, feelings of guilt, shame, emotional deprivation, loss of self-worth, violation of one’s dignity and intrusion into one’s private space. It can prove nasty and highly damaging to the victim because it assails the very core of his/her sense of being.

Tendulkar has presented this insidious form of violence as something pervasive and endemic in middle-class society. He often shows women as its frequent and worst victims in
everyday life. Benare’s fear of being stigmatized for becoming an unwed mother haunts her like a nightmare. The sensitive reader or audience can easily empathize with her for her pain and trauma which she is made to suffer when her co-actors expose her intimate and private life to ridicule. The way they try to shame her can be psychologically tormenting and crippling for any sensitive human being. His play Kamala,156 too, offers an incisive study in this form of violence against women. Sarita’s fear – lest Jaisingh should feel angry – turns her into a kind of domestic and sexual slave. Her realization that her sense of self-worth as a human being has been destroyed by her egotistical husband is too harsh and humiliating for her to suffer any longer.

A study of Tendulkar’s plays reveals in this way that the world he has depicted is full of violence in its different forms and shades. His interest, however, is not restricted to a mere dramatization of violent scenes, incidents or actions. He, in fact, goes beneath the surface and probes deep into the causes responsible for this phenomenon in human life and society. His insatiable curiosity to explore and understand the dynamics of violence, factors and forces that generate it, appears to be a distinguishing feature of his treatment of this theme. It adds new depths and dimensions to his presentation of this reality of human experience and, thus, makes his characters and the world they inhabit look so real.

Tendulkar delves deep into human nature and culture to diagnose clinically how various forces interact with each other to engender violence in one’s individual and social life. He suggests that violence does not often result from any single factor but arises from a complex interplay of variety of factors such as biological, psychological, social and economic. His plays reveal how strong human biological needs and drives lead to violent consequences particularly when they are thwarted by restrictive or blocking situations. When the psychic energy which is based on biological sexual instincts, motivated for pleasure is displaced or frustrated, it may erupt in violent forms of expressions. For example, Mitra’s devouring possessiveness for Nama in A Friend’s Story is the clear manifestation of her irresistible lesbian urge. When deprived of fulfillment, her libidinous energy becomes self-directed and inverted, pushing her to the desperate act of committing suicide.

Besides biological inheritance, individual’s psychological make-up is also depicted in his plays as a potential source of one’s violent behaviour. Basic human anxiety about the world which he/she perceives as hostile, causing feelings of fear, insecurity and alienation has been regarded as a significant cause of one’s violent attitude. The loss of self-prestige, particularly due
to humiliating experiences in one’s early childhood, tends to motivate such individuals into aggressive self-assertion and imposition over those whom they perceive as weak. Moreover, one’s identification, conscious or unconscious, with somebody like the patriarch, who enjoys power on the strength of his violent ways, too, can lead one to emulate such examples. One’s socialization in a milieu characterized by institutional and structural violence, but often perceived as something normal, has also been brought out as a potent source of violent behaviour in such cases.

Tendulkar’s unusual insight into the complexities of human psyche has enabled him to lay bare these various psychological factors, imparting to portrayals of his men and women an element of human authenticity. Shakharam’s sadism and the violence he perpetrates on Laxmi and Champa clearly appear to be rooted in his own frustrated search for love and a painful loss of self-esteem in his childhood at the hands of his own parents. It is his unconscious and irresistible urge to reconstruct his battered ego and thus to reassure himself of his manliness that goads him to abuse and beat his women and even to kill Champa.

Failure of men to live up to their expected social roles, resulting in loss of social prestige and sense of worth in their own estimation, is often an important cause of violent behaviour in such cases. They tend to seek, often unconsciously, to reassure themselves of their self-worth and thus try to bolster their low self-esteem by the perceived failures or weaknesses of others whose discomfiture and humiliation, therefore, they revel in. This is evident from the behaviour of Kashikar and his group with Benare in Silence! The Court is in Session. Benare’s economic independence and the freedom she enjoys are, it seems, a potent cause for their jealousy aggravated by their own failures to live up to the roles and image of man as defined by patriarchal order. It is their effort to prove themselves superior to Benare and thus overcome their frustrations by sitting in judgment on her as custodians of social morality, condemning her as a fallen woman. If in the case of Kashikar and his group it is the ‘aspirational deprivation’ that is the root cause of their sadism, Jaisingh, driven indiscreetly by patriarchal code of masculine ambition and success in competition for the sake of social and economic status, reveals how such men treat women as mere commodities and violate their sense of human dignity within as well as outside the house walls. The mad race for self-promotion in career makes men like Jaisingh callous and indifferent towards the feelings of others. This also finds expression in the form of modern urban ethos of materialism and the resultant excessive greed, disregarding all sanctities
of even personal and familial relationships. *The Vultures* reveals the savagery of such men and women and depicts shocking scenes of violence between brothers and sister and also against their father and uncle.

Tendulkar also shows how one’s socialization in a milieu characterized by institutional and structural violence can also prove to be a cause of such behaviour. In *Kanyadaan*, for example, he hints at the repressive social stratification and discrimination within the caste in Indian social structures as a cause of violent behavior of Arun, a young and educated dalit boy. He is an example of how painful consciousness of being oppressed for centuries can turn the victim into a victimizer. His acts of brutality against Jyoti, his wife from the upper caste, appear to be a consequence of the accumulated hatred and frustration his people have suffered for a long period.

Tendulkar shows that human instinct to dominate and exercise control over others is often behind almost all forms of violence. The quest for power and its perpetuation leads one to devise and employ different forms of social, cultural, economic and political strategies. Struggle for power implies efforts at raising the self by forcing others down one way or the other. Its maintenance necessitates the use of force to prevent others from moving upwards and thus to use all possible means to perpetuate hierarchy in one’s own favour. Gender, class, caste and political hierarchies are, in fact, based upon the predominance of this basic human urge for power.

Political institutions of the state are its most obvious examples, illustrating how power leads to oppression and atrocities. Ghashiram’s lust for power makes him barter away his daughter in exchange for becoming Kotwal of Poona. This unleashes his revenge instincts and he goes, as it were, amuck with power, perpetrating the most horrifying forms of cruelty on the people of Poona. Showing that such violent men always meet violent ends, Tendulkar depicts Ghashiram’s own death at the hands of the crowd which stones him mercilessly to death. *Encounter in Umbugland*, too, reveals how instinct for power motivates princess Vijaya as well as the Ministers to use violence against each other, causing even death of some of the common people in the crowd.

Besides depicting violence in its different forms and laying bare its various motivating and causal factors, Tendulkar’s plays also highlight attitudes and ways, means and methods which individuals use to negotiate this reality of their existence. Though every man or woman is shown to adopt responses specific to his/her personality and situation, Tendulkar has highlighted
largely the responses of passive submission, escape, aggression, conformity, resignation and humanistic resistance, indicating their respective strengths and weaknesses. The fact that he has delineated characters who represent subtle variations within these broad frameworks of responses and also the ones who exhibit complex overlapping and interplay of these mechanisms testifies his commitment to depicting the truth of human nature and situation, defying all reductive definitions. This makes his treatment of this theme appear more comprehensive, holistic and convincing.

The simplest of Tendulkar’s characters are seen displaying an attitude of passive submission in the face of hostile circumstances which they neither have the ability to understand clearly nor do they seem to possess any strength required to cope with them. This response is noticeable mainly in his women characters who are denied access to knowledge and power in patriarchal system in order to keep them subjugated to male authority. Women like Kamala, an uncomprehending victim of flesh-trade and Gauri, a silent scapegoat for both Ghashiram and Nana Sahib, exhibit this attitude of servile submission to their fate. But not all those who surrender to their lot do it unresentfully. Rama in *The Vultures*, for instance, resents strongly against the oppressive and vulturine conduct of all the members in her family, but fails to stand up against them and alter her situation. This, the play suggests, is mainly because of the fact that though she is sensitive and has a vision of different and better life, she lacks inner strength and self-confidence so essential for any decisive action.

If women like Rama surrender to their circumstances, though resentfully, there are also characters who exhibit tendencies of seeking escape from pressures and challenges in their lives. Such characters appear to be rather highly sensitive but deficient in commitment to some larger set of values which could serve them as a guiding and stabilizing force in the face of crisis. Mitra in *A Friend’s Story*, for example, is unable to negotiate her own frustrations and feelings of emptiness exacerbated by hostile milieu. As a result, she tends to escape in alcoholism, sex and ultimately into death. Not only women but men like Rajaninath and Kashikar in *The Vultures* and *Silence! The Court is in Session* respectively also display different evasive tendencies when confronted with their failures and frustrations.

The attitude of conformism appears to be another widely adopted mechanism by both men and women in the world of Tendulkar’s plays. Such people are often found destitute of either an adequate knowledge and understanding of the intricacies of their situations or are
unable to develop their own independent responses in the face of new and challenging situations. They, therefore, reveal strong inclinations to depend for strength and guidance on some external authority such as religion, theories, traditions, ideas or some set of values. Like characters displaying tendencies of passive submission or escape, those who exhibit conformist behaviour, too, reveal subtle variations on this attitude which makes these characters also look well individuated figures. That is why, characters like Nath Devlalikar in *Kanyadaan* and Laxmi in *Sakharam Binder* appear to share this approach to life even though their situations are so widely different in many ways. If Nath relies heavily and uncritically on old Gandhian ideals, Laxmi depends for strength on her blind faith in religion and in the traditional role of a wife. We find that because of Nath’s unthinking adherence to borrowed ideals he proves to be an utter failure in negotiating the new and emerging situations. Similarly, because of Laxmi’s complete dependence only on external values and traditions she tends to become rather insensitive and unsympathetic even to Champa, a co-sufferer at the hands of Sakharam.

This clearly suggests that Tendulkar doesn’t seem to regard dependence on any reductive formula as a viable approach to real life, full of endless varieties and complexities of situations and challenges. Like the attitudes of meek and unthinking surrender or that of evasion and escape from demands and pressures of realities, human propensity to rely mindlessly and exclusively on anything outside one’s self as a source of strength and guidance also doesn’t appear to get the writer’s full endorsement. Only a comprehensive and dynamic approach to life seems to come closest to getting Tendulkar’s approval as a penetrative and insightful painter of life. This is evidenced by his portrayals of a number of characters who confront the highly challenging situations, full of pain and anger, demonstrating greater elements of resilience and commitment to these qualities. Characters like Sarita, Benare and Vijaya immediately come to mind as examples, illustrating this approach characterized by a fusion of psychological and moral courage with a broad and dynamic outlook.

Sarita, for instance, to begin with, appears as a wife discharging all the traditional duties and responsibilities to serve her husband and look after the household honestly and conscientiously. But as a woman with sensitive and sympathetic heart, she feels cut to the quick when she learns how Kamala, a poor tribal woman, has been bought and exhibited to other journalists at a press conference by her husband, Jaisingh. She sees in Kamala, a reflection of all the women of her society who are treated just like slaves to gratify only the needs and ego of
men. A woman with intellectual abilities, moral courage and self-confidence, she resolves to stand up for not only her own integrity and dignity as an individual but also for all the Kamalas of her world. The fact that she doesn’t walk out on Jaisingh in a fit of anger and decides to stay back to help him recover from the trauma of being sacked by his employer is an evidence of a fine combination of the qualities of head, heart and soul in her. The way she reveals a remarkable capacity and ability to learn and grow into an aware and actively resolute human being, capable of dealing with the situations around her, makes her a truly impressive and memorable figure. It is, however, significant to observe that the number of characters possessing these traits is rather limited. This suggests that women with such qualities constitute only a small minority in Indian society even today.

What emerges clearly from a critical look at such a vast variety of responses which he has depicted in his plays is the fact that he has tried to explore human nature and the world around in a realistic manner without trying to reduce his men and women or their coping mechanisms to any set of fixed ideas and philosophy. This commitment to explore, understand and depict life with full honesty of an artist, revealed by the way he has dramatized different forms, causes and motivating factors of violence along with the different responses they evoke from men and women, appears to be the secret of powerful effect his plays have upon the audience. The very fact that they have proved to be successful on the stage and have earned for Tendulkar a place among major modern Indian playwrights is a testimony to his powers as a great and successful artist. It therefore becomes interesting and necessary to try to understand how the subject of violence has been given an aesthetic expression making his plays so exciting and engaging even to those who feel unsettled or disturbed by the boldness with which he has dealt with this truth of human life and nature.

It is evident that his treatment of violence serves as a unifying principle, projecting his weltanschauung and providing an organic unity to different elements constituting his art of drama. It is from this that different incidents, situations, characters, images and symbols tend to derive their meaning and significance and thus, form a unified pattern of aesthetic relationship. Since he reveals violence as something innate to man, important incidents and events in his plays tend to emanate from the behaviours and personalities of his characters, exhibiting strong tendencies of aggression. His characters, therefore, assume a place of central significance in the scheme of his ‘total theatre.’ They invariably carry the burden of the theme and are pivotal to the
structures of his plots. Situations, incidents and events derive their relevance in the development of the theme and plot which revolve around mainly the central character, man or woman, in almost all of his plays. For example, it is Benare who is the very soul and also the backbone of the theme and the plot of *Silence! The Court is in Session*. This is equally true of Sakharam in *Sakharam Binder*, Ghashiram in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, Vijaya in *Encounter in Umbugland*, Nath in *Kanyadaan* and Mitra in *A Friend’s Story*. Tendulkar’s art of characterization, therefore, appears to be the chief source of the universal appeal of his plays. Tendulkar’s characters are throbbing real human beings with instincts, desires, ambitions, impulses and conflicts of all sorts experienced by all of us in varying degrees, at one time or the other in our life. In the life-like portrayals of his characters, his audiences see something of themselves and thus tend to experience identification with them at different levels – emotional, intellectual and moral. Their conflicts, both internal as well as external, make them highly absorbing, imparting to the plot and atmosphere of the plays, a powerful element of suspense. The way Tendulkar’s audience and readers identify themselves with his characters and share their human propensities, is a source of perennial interest, yielding to them pleasure peculiar to his theatre. They experience not only a kind of emotional pleasure but also the one that comes from the discovery of knowledge about things buried in the dark oceans of their own psyche. Even those scenes or actions of his characters which display abominable brutality tend to induce in us a reaction, producing pleasure of thought, reflection and rejection of the immoral.

Since the world he has depicted is full of violence in different forms and degrees, language of his characters, too, is the language of violence. Even the choice of words and dialogues tend to reveal faithfully the situation and character charged with strong feelings, emotions and motivations, resulting in different ways of violent behaviour. The language his characters speak is not only fully expressive of their peculiar temperaments and attitudes but is also in complete consonance with their class and milieu. He has also used the language of silence, gestures, movements and also the tone and pitch of speech in a very effective manner. Images and symbols too appear perfectly integral to the characters, plots, moods and the view and vision of the playwright. For example, the recurring imagery of trap, animals, hunter, prey and birds reveals to the reader the essence of Tendulkar’s view of human life in the context of the violent ways of larger nature.
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 native Marathi stage on the other. It is, therefore, difficult to force his theatrical oeuvre into any single philosophy or tradition. In fact, his stage deals with life as he perceives it in its wholeness, entertaining, enlightening, exciting and enthralling his audience with the totality of dramatic effect. His art of characterization, plot construction, handling of different dimensions and complexities of conflict, language, gestures, silences, sound, imagery, lighting, spectacle and music, all combine and cohere so well with his theme of violence that reader and audience leave his plays carrying their powerful impact on their sensibility.

It is evident from this brief critical look at Tendulkar’s major plays that his treatment of violence and its aestheticization is essential for our comprehensive and balanced understanding and assessment of his art and mind. A detailed and in-depth analysis of this topic appears to be necessary in order to arrive at a fair interpretation of his view of life. It can enable one to put in proper perspective the kind of world he has chosen to depict with its intricacies, conflicts, pains and struggles of men and women for domination and survival. A focus on this major concern of Tendulkar can also help us appreciate his treatment of such issues as gender, caste, class and politics. In fact, the workings of social, political, economic and cultural structures and how they have an in-built element of violence, affecting lives of individuals in varying ways and with different consequences, appear to be very important for our incisive understanding of the relevance of his art to society.

Since he depicts violence as a reality underlying different aspects and areas of life and human relationships, a study of this theme can provide us with a holistic and integrated view of the full range and scope of his canvas. It can also unveil the depths and reality of human psyche and body, establishing not only the contemporary social relevance of his plays but also showing why Tendulkar can be described as a playwright of all times. By examining his art of drama from this angle we can also be in a better position to appreciate the repertoire of various skills and devices at his command which he marshals so well to present even the most gruesome scenes of violence in a fascinating manner. An investigation of his art of characterization, use of speech patterns, imagery, spectacles and all the other devices used by him can also yield interesting insights into his skills as a major dramatist of modern India.
In view of these possibilities of new insights into all the important aspects of Tendulkar’s art and mind, the present study has been devoted to a detailed critical examination of his treatment of violence in an aesthetically effective manner. This is, however, a modest attempt in this direction and doesn’t claim to say any final word on Tendulkar and his plays.

The study has been divided mainly into six parts, including this first chapter of introduction. Various forms of violence in different areas of life dealt with by Tendulkar will be taken up for an analysis in the second chapter. An in-depth study of the dynamics of violence – the factors and forces which cause or motivate it in human life and society – will constitute the third chapter of this endeavour. Tendulkar’s dramatization of various responses and mechanisms his men and women adopt to negotiate the phenomenon of violence will be the focus of chapter four. An effort will be made to discuss Tendulkar’s art of aestheticization of violence in the next part of the study. All the important findings of this critical attempt will be summed up in the chapter of conclusion. The study aims at offering, from this perspective, a comprehensive and consistent critical appreciation of Tendulkar’s view and vision of life as an artist.
References


2. Ibid., p. 2.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 9.


7. Ibid., p. 28.

8. Ibid., p. 49.


11. Ibid., p. 10.

12. Geeta Kumar, “Portrayal of Women in Tendulkar’s *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* and *Sakharam Binder*,” Sudhakar Pandey and Freya Barua, p. 16.


16 V.B. Deshpande, “Vijay Tendulkar’s Contribution to Indian Drama,” V.M. Madge, pp. 18-29.


19 Kalindi Deshpande, p.91.

20 ibid.

21 ibid., p. 90.

22 ibid., p. 89.

23 Thankamma, p. 85.

24 ibid., pp. 83-84.

25 ibid., p. 84.

26 Maya Pandit, p. 71.

27 ibid.

28 ibid.

29 ibid., p. 70.

30 Uday Shankar Ojha, “Vijay Tendulkar’s *The Vultures*: A Study of Crude Realism in Postcolonial Perspective and beyond,” A. N. Prasad and Satish Burbuddhe, pp. 140-152.


33 ibid., p. 16.

34 ibid.

35 ibid., p. 17.
36 ibid., p. 20.

37 ibid., p. 21.

38 ibid., p. 22.


40 ibid., p. 153.

41 ibid., p. 165.


44 ibid., p. 87.

45 Dr. Ram Sharma, “The Trial Between the Humanists and the Anti Humanists in Vijay Tendulkar’s Play *Silence! The Court is in Session*,” A. N. Prasad and Satish Burbuddhe, p. 126.

46 ibid.


48 ibid., p. 107.


52 Shanta Gokhale, “Tendulkar on his own Terms,” V.M. Madge, pp. 30-61.

53 N.S. Dharan, p. 70.
54 Indulekha, p. 164.
55 ibid.
56 ibid.
57 ibid., p. 165.
58 ibid., p. 167.
60 V.M. Madge, p. 128.
61 ibid.
63 V.M. Madge, p. 121.
64 Indulekha Roy Burman, p. 163.
66 Shanta Gokhale, p. 32.
67 ibid.
68 ibid., p. 43.

74 A.N. Prasad, p. 2.

75 ibid.

76 Shirish Chindhade, p. 88.

77 ibid., p. 86.

78 ibid.

79 Anju Bala Agarwal, p. 207.

80 ibid.

81 ibid.


86 C. Coelho, p. 30.

87 ibid., p. 34.

88 ibid., p. 31.

89 ibid., p. 34.

90 Pramila Devi, p. 113.

91 ibid., p. 118.

92 ibid.
93 Geeta Kumar, p. 73.

94 ibid., p. 77.


101 S. Lamnek qtd. in W. Heitmeyer and J Hagan, p. 113.


111. Ibid., p. 16.

112. Ibid., p. 15.

113. Ibid., p. 16.


121. Ibid., p. 21.


124. Ibid.


Vijay Tendulkar qtd. in Vivek Bendre, an Interview, “My writing has always been honest,” Frontline, 22, No. 24 (2005).

“View from the Balcony,” p. 25.

ibid., p. 25.


ibid.

ibid., p. 17.

ibid.

ibid., p. 20.


ibid., p. 18.

ibid.

ibid., p. 18.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid., p. 18.

ibid., p. 25.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid., p. 18.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.


ibid.


ibid.


Vijay Tendulkar, “The Vultures,” *Collected Plays in Translation*, trans. Priya Adarkar (New Delhi: OUP, 2004), pp. 199-265. Citations to the text of the play are also from the same edition, and the page numbers in all such cases have been given in parentheses immediately following the quotation. The play has been abbreviated as TV for such textual quotations.

Vijay Tendulkar, “Ghashiram Kotwal,” *Collected Plays in Translation*, trans. Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliot (New Delhi: OUP, 2004), pp. 359-416. Citations to the text of the play are also from the same edition, and the page numbers in all such cases have been given in parentheses immediately following the quotation. The play has been abbreviated as GK for such textual quotations.

Vijay Tendulkar, “Sakharam Binder,” *Collected Plays in Translation*, trans. Kumud Mehta and Shanta Gokhale (New Delhi: OUP, 2004), pp.123-198. Citations to the text of the play are also from the same edition, and the page numbers in all such cases have been given in parentheses immediately following the quotation. The play has been abbreviated as SB for such textual quotations.

Vijay Tendulkar, “Kanyadaan,” *Collected Plays in Translation*, trans. Gowri Ramnarayan (New Delhi: OUP, 2004), pp. 495-566. Citations to the text of the play are also from the same edition, and the page numbers in all such cases have been given in parentheses immediately following the quotation. The play has been abbreviated as KD for such textual quotations.

also from the same edition, and the page numbers in all such cases have been given in parentheses immediately following the quotation. The play has been abbreviated as SCS for such textual quotations.

154Vijay Tendulkar, “A Friend’s Story,” Collected Plays in Translation trans. Gowri Ramnarayan (New Delhi: OUP, 2004), pp. 417-494. Citations to the text of the play are also from the same edition, and the page numbers in all such cases have been given in parentheses immediately following the quotation. The play has been abbreviated as AFS for such textual quotations.

155Vijay Tendulkar, “Kamala,” Collected Plays in Translation trans. Priya Adarkar (New Delhi: OUP, 2004), pp. 1-52. Citations to the text of the play are also from the same edition, and the page numbers in all such cases have been given in parentheses immediately following the quotation. The play has been abbreviated as K for such textual quotations.

156Vijay Tendulkar, “Encounter in Umbagland,” Collected Plays in Translation, trans. Priya Adarkar (New Delhi: OUP, 2004), pp. 267-357. Citations to the text of the play are also from the same edition, and the page numbers in all such cases have been given in parentheses immediately following the quotation. The play has been abbreviated as EU for such textual quotations.