Chapter-V

CONCLUSION
Vijay Tendulkar, originally a Marathi playwright, heralds a new school of drama like Harold Pinter and Edward Albee who handle new themes, new subjects and new techniques. It is in this sense that Tendulkar modernizes the Marathi theatre. He uses the stage not to entertain the audience but to shock their sensibility, by making them aware of questions pertaining to human relationship and the reality of human existence. As far as the subject matter and his art are concerned, the playwright is akin to the playwrights such as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, John Osborne, Bertolt Brecht, etc. His plays in general display their author’s concerns and commitment instead of providing an escapist way through amusing scenes and situations. They are rather “engaged with the presentation of the problems of social inequality, and the place of individual in the society that is becoming hostile increasingly to the individual aspirations.”

The world of Tendulkar is one of the middle class and the lower middle class of Maharashtrian society. His protagonists are placed in a hostile-world, where they fight for their life values and survival and mostly it is a losing battle. The odds are so mighty and so overwhelming that one cannot expect a victory to woman like Benare, Jyoti, Rama or Savita whose individual will and efforts to chalk out new paths are stifled by the brute male hegemony. So the battle is more significant rather than the result. The stand the individual takes against the mighty, crushing odds and his fight upto his defeat, through which his personality is revealed is the crux of Tendulkarian play. Thus, in creating fighting-losing individual, in
presenting an individual *versus* society, Tendulkar succeeds in his efforts to convey a quest of his heart and mind for individual freedom.

In all the six plays, taken for the present study, Tendulkar has dared to write on the tabooed subjects like sex and violence in human life. The way the playwright dramatizes the man-woman relationship in its various forms in his contemporary male-dominated society reveals that the theme of violence is intimately related to the theme of sex in his plays. Almost all the female characters, irrespective of age, class, status and background, fall prey to atrocities and cruelties perpetrated by male characters under the umbrella cover of the patriarchal order. Physically, they are subjected to beating, thrashing and unrelenting drudgery; sexually, they are abused and subjugated; psychologically, they are tormented and tortured; mentally they are compelled to comply with the life-denying stereotyped societal norms and mores, and emotionally, they are deprived and blackmailed. In his plays, violence inflicted on most of the women characters stems from various patriarchal segments such as traditional marriage, conventional sexual morality, outdated religious rituals and economic dependence. Miss Leela Benare and Mrs Kashikar, Kamala and Sarita, Laxmi and Champa, Gulabi and Gauri, Rama and Manik—these women characters taken in contrasting pairs face problems of identity and survival. Underneath their superficial differences, all are commanded by man, for their pleasures and under their laws. They are speechless and powerless against the male dominance and are tragic and vanquished by the end. Tendulkar’s treatment of various aspects of vulnerable position of women in modern and yet conventional societal order provides an insight into the vices of the society such as hypocrisy, hollowness, egoism, falsehood, vulgarity, barbarism,
corruption, narrow-mindedness, etc. It is in this portrayal of the filth and squalor in society around him that his plays mark a definite departure from the previous Marathi theatre.

The preceding discussion of Tendulkar’s major plays reveals the fact that the social status of woman in the contemporary Indian society is more or less the same even in the twentieth century, especially in the post-war period, with the multifarious social, economic, educational and legal reformative measures in the background. The country where the patriarchal system with feudal mentality continues to operate in one way or the other, the real empowerment of women in all respects is a distant cry, especially in the middle layer of society--the so-called upholder of the conventional ethos and morality. What has been proving the stumbling block in the way of realization of true freedom and true identity of women in India is not the paucity of means and money, but it is the mentality, largely nurtured and governed by the patriarchal order of our society which denies the equal status to women. In his attack on society the playwright’s mutiny against the feudal values and his demand for the new code of conduct are clearly perceptible.

A close examination of Tendulkar’s plays like Silence! The Court is in Session and Kanyadaan reveals that even educated and self-reliant women characters are not only supposed but also compelled to conform to the obsolete and stereotyped familial customs, ethical mores and traditional norms. As and when they refuse to abide by the demands or rules of the patriarchal order, they face social hire in the myriad forms such as apathy, disgust, disgrace, dehumanization, violence, expulsion from home, etc., whereas their male counterparts, the so-called protectors of women, go
Leela Benare, an unmarried school teacher, in *Silence! The Court is in session* is dragged into the court for her sexual affairs out of wedlock; whereas her male counterpart, Prof. Damle is set free. Benare is not only dismissed from her job but the vulture males brutally order that the foetus in her womb must be destroyed. An educated and unconventional woman like Benare, though economically independent, is not given chance and choice even in her personal matters. In *Kanyadaan*, the educated Jyoti is used by her father and abused by her husband. In *Kamala*, the plight of another educated woman like Sarita, trapped in the conventional marriage, is no better than that of a domestic hand and a bastard. It establishes the fact that even the objections and protestations of the educated women are finally swallowed up by the silence imposed upon them by their male aggressors even in the contemporary society. By dramatizing the suppression of educated women, Tendulkar disapproves the male-hegemonic social order which has failed to overcome the traditional barriers of sex-discrimination and does not allow gender-equality. It is observed that women, in his plays, occupy a unique position among the oppressed section of mankind. What Simon de Beavoir says of women very well applies to Tendulkar’s women characters. “They have gained only what has been willingly to grant; they have taken nothing, they have only received.” His plays reveal that the reasons of exploitation and oppression go on changing, but the victim or the oppressed remain the same. The playwright also highlights the Indian penal system, which is discriminatory and arbitrary in the sense that it has failed to dispense justice in adequate terms to women even in the modernized and democratic Indian state.
Tendulkar satirizes the traditional sexual morality for its double standards—one for males and another for females. In his plays, women are expected to follow the traditionally prescribed roles within or outside family. Men are tacitly allowed to enjoy extramarital relations; whereas if women do so, they have to face ignominy at the hands of their male counterparts. While Benare in Silence! The Court is in Session, is forced to abort her foetus, Champa in Sakkaram Binder is strangled to death and Rama in The Vultures is beaten to abort her womb, their counterparts Professor Damle in Silence! The Court is in Session, Sakharam in Sakkaram Binder and Rajaninath in The Vultures respectively enjoy immunity from any legal action or social chastisement. Moreover, most of the women characters are sexually abused, exploited and subjugated. Though they want to raise their voice against the injustice done to them, they have to muffle their voices, fearing one thing or another. This suggests that, in the world of Tendulkar, there are two worlds—one for males and another for females. By treating the theme of sexual morality in the context of man-woman relationship, the playwright brings to light the lopsided character of the existing social order in India. By exposing the double standards of morality, the playwright emphasizes the need of new code and morality for happy and healthy man-woman relationships.

In the dramatic world of Tendulkar, the institution of marriage, the prominent segment or constituent of patriarchy, also acts a source of women’s exploitation and suppression. Most of the female characters, who are economically dependent, are trapped in the traditional marriage, where they are confined to dreadful drudgery, bearing and rearing children, looking after all sorts of needs and requirements of their male counterparts.
They completely rely on their husbands or male partners for their family life or day-to-day social life. Within marriage, they fall victims to the sadistic tendencies of males, but they cannot think of leaving them, as they have nowhere to go and settle. Under the conventional marriage, man is supposed to be a bread-winner and woman is supposed to look after hearth and home. As a result of the prescribed role, she has no economic independence, and this is also one of the major causes of her exploitation in the patriarchal system where she is deprived of consequential and rightful place in the family or society. Jyoti in Kanyadaan, Nana’s wives in Ghashiram Kotwal, Rama in The Vultures and Sarita in Kamala are trapped in the circumstances where they are deprived of dignified life as human beings. All these females are exploited in various ways—physically, emotionally, sexually and economically—by their male counterparts in the name of social security and support. Though they later or sooner realize the reason of their predicament and want to raise their voice, but most of them fail to gather courage.

The playwright also highlights how religious hypocrisy is responsible for the miserable position of women in the contemporary Indian society. It is religion that prepares them for exploitation at the hands of men. It supports the system which exploits women in one way or the other. Women characters in his plays, though religious by temperament, are exploited in the name of religion. Religion has taught them to be docile, submissive, caring, affectionate, devoted, obedient and non-violent. They repose faith in God, but ungodly men like Nana and Sakharam do wrongs to them. Their chastity is outraged, their docility is misused, their affection is exploited, their religiosity is violated and their devotion is undermined.
The playwright has pointed out the limitations of religion in the age of science and technology where it seems to be outdated and ineffective. By exposing the life-denying features of religion, the playwright emphasizes the urgent need of true religion based on love, compassion, trust and feelings to improve the condition of women in the Indian society.

In his plays, women are exploited, subjugated and tormented by men both within and outside the institution of family. His plays explore the exploitation and oppression of women at the hands of fathers, brothers, husbands, uncles and fellow companions. Feudal values are so thoroughly grounded in Indian society that no one can root them out. Women are often the victims of the male-dominated society, as both men and women try their best to preserve feudal values and further perpetuate the oppressive ways of life. If any one rebels against it, the voice of protest is drowned in the noisy cries of the so-called upholders of morality. The father in Ghashiram Kotwal mortgages the chastity of his lovely daughter in lieu of political power; the father in Kanyadaan uses his educated daughter to perpetuate his hollow ideals; the brothers in The Vultures inflict variety of violence on their unmarried sister to extort a huge amount of money from her lover, and the husbands in Sakharm Binder subject their wives to inhuman cruelties. The condition of women without family is more or less the same as is found within family. Miss Benare in Silence! The Court is in Session, Laxmi and Champa in Sakharam Binder, Kamala in Kamala and Manik in The Vultures---all undergo the same harrowing experiences of life at the hands of men in the outer world. The study reveals not only the surprising but also the shocking fact that women in free India are still living as slaves irrespective of class, status and background. A woman plays a
central role in Tendulkar's major plays such as *Silence! The Court is in Session, The Vultures, Sakharam Binder, Ghashiram Kotwal, Kamala and Kanyadaan*. It is through the portrayal of female characters that the playwright exposes vices and weaknesses of society. Women are often projected as exploited and losers.

The study evinces that women in the plays of Tendulkar are in a vulnerable position, largely because of the life-denying atmosphere of the rigid and rusted patriarchal system. However, it does not mean that women in his plays are completely flawless and innocent, and they have nothing to do with the plight of women and patriarchy. Another factor that gets highlighted in the course of the study is that some of the women characters are themselves responsible for their pitiable plight. They directly or indirectly approve the system that prepares the grounds for their exploitation, subjugation and oppression. Mrs. Kashikar in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Manik in *The Vultures*, Laxmi in *Sakhram Binder* are more or less responsible for their problems.

Tendulkar's plays represent women as a class. According to their unique roles in the plays, the women characters portrayed are of two types: sensitive, tender-hearted and generous, and rebellious, dominant and assertive. Benare, Rama, Sarita and Jyoti represent intellectually crippled generation of women who are conscious of the injustice imposed on them, but they neither bear any will nor show any guts to rebel against their male counterparts. Therefore, they themselves are also responsible for their miseries and sufferings to a large extent. The character of Sarita in the play *Kamala* exemplifies that the so-called education has provided just sophisticated slaves to their male counterparts. He treats his women
characters “with understanding and compassion while pitying them against women who are selfish, hypocritical and brutally ambitious.”

Critically analyzed Tendulkar’s major plays reveal complex working of his stylistic features. He has liberated the Indian drama and theatre from the limitations of romantic idealism of the early 20th century. Thematically and technically, he has revolutionized the medium of drama. He has the power of experimental theatre and drama. He has broken the monotony of introduction, complexities and resolution formula of Marathi problem play and has artistically defined the pressure of well-made play. He artistically imbibed the Sanskrit tradition and the modern theatre in his dramaturgy. *Ghashiram Kotwal* is clearly a landmark in the Indian drama and theatre, which has amalgamated all three elements.

Most of Tendulkar’s plays are written in naturalistic-realistic mode. But the last soliloquy of Benare in *Silence! The Court is in Session* is not in realistic mode. As a theatrical device in *Ghashiram Kotwal* he uses folk drama, song and dance effectively to study power, violence and sex in exploring the human instincts in relation to lust for power and sex. His craftsmanship of dialogue is fully appreciated by R.V. Dhongde “Perhaps after Deval, Tendulkar is the only dramatist who writes simple, natural, character-revealing dialogues that can reach poetic heights when required.” Tendulkar, labelled as an angry young man of the sixties and seventies, uses brutal language which exposes the brutal realities of the oppressive and hideous male order. Giving importance to the creation of character Tendulkar writes: “As a playwright my characters were the backbone of my plays and they never were cardboard character but were living human beings who had their own separate life and expression”
choice of the words he uses “signifies the culture of the person, his or her region, profession and in short the whole background. The speech pattern likewise helps to particularize the character and to make it an individual rather than a type.”6 With the skill of characterization and the craft of dialogue writing, Tendulkar like Pinter also gives importance to what he calls “The utilization of silence in a dialogue.”7 He believes that silence could be perfect with all possible directions and tensions to convey the playwright’s meaning.

The controversies that arose after the performance of many of his plays are a clear proof of his unconventional attitude towards human problems. It is said that Ibsen and his realistic technique have exercised a profound influence on Tendulkar. Tendulkar’s explorations of the real demonstrate his extraordinary power of probing, analyzing and interpreting the moral and psychological states of his characters. Speaking to Satya Dev Dubey he said: “I feel a concern about human existence as such. Human existence is a lot more important than what happens to Marathi Theatre.”8 As a playwright with sensitive vision, his approach to life is essentially affirmative, but he cannot forget the harsh realities of life. Dealing with complexity of human relationships, all his major plays constitute a subtle critique of modern Indian society. His commitment to human values and ideals can be felt while reading his plays.

Tendulkar, though not a self-acknowledged feminist, treats his women characters with understanding and compassion while pitying them against men who are selfish, hypocritical and brutally ambitious. The change from the traditional to the modern is carefully etched in his plays through his powerful female characters. He makes every effort look into the
psyche of his characters and focuses his attention on the ugliness he detects therein. Women's oppression and inferior status combine together to enhance the sufferings of the victims—both qualitatively and quantitatively. Most of their sufferings often go unnoticed and unorganized because of the sexist prejudices of both the oppressor and the oppressed.

A careful perusal of Tendulkar's plays evinces that patriarchy is deeply entrenched in our society. Men have always thought themselves to be the centre of the universe and expected what Simone de Beauvoir calls 'the other sex' to fall in line and accept male domination silently and ungrudgingly. It is a question of only the degree as to what extent they suppress women. When one looks critically at the plight of women today in the context of patriarchal social milieu, it seems the fairer sex is fair only on paper. Though the society makes tall claims of evolution, it seems to be in no mood to give women equal share in real life. Most of Tendulkar's plays are set in modern contemporary world where also women get a raw deal at the hands of men. It is ironic that women considered the weaker sex, are never considered too weak to do back-breaking house-chores. Men expect women to be sexually pure, full of compassion and a talent for nurturance.

Depicting the psychological as well as physical exploitation of women within or without family, the playwright reveals that evil tendencies inherent in human psyche render people blind and transform them from human beings into loathsome animals. This is how Tendulkar tries to destroy outdated pieties and stereotyped beliefs in the so-called modernized, cultured contemporary world. While exposing the foibles and follies; hypocrisy and hollowness of the individual vis-à-vis those of
society, Tendulkar urges upon the audiences to ponder over their problems. He, thus, emulates the Ibsenian attitude to the problem. His plays end on a climax suggesting that the action may end, but not the story---Champa’s killing by Sakharam, Laxmi’s digging to bury her and the knocking at the doors in *Sakharam Binder* give us a heightened sense of expectancy, where the play ends. His plays end without offering any solutions to the audience who leave the theatre in a contemplative mood. The open-endedness of most of his plays may be seen as one of the striking features. “By not giving a solution, I leave possibilities open, for whatever course change may take. When the members of my audience go home and chew on the situation, they might be able to see their daughter or sister in the woman’s position and come up with a way of changing the situation for her advantage.”9 In the same vein, Asha K. Kanwar, too observes: “by leaving the ethical questions open, Tendulkar is perhaps inviting his audience to think about the solution for themselves.”10 But one cannot term his plays as problem plays like those of Henry Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw or John Galsworthy. Since what his plays depict is the socio-cultural reality of human life, they are thought-provoking and evoke a note of silent protest in the minds of their audience.

As a social iconoclast, Tendulkar manifests his strong dissatisfaction with the hollowness and hypocrisy prevailing in the contemporary male-dominated social order. The world he has projected looks strange or fantastic at times, but it is real with its vices, drawbacks, follies, weaknesses, etc. The tone of his plays is realistic, at times, satirical and poignant. “Tendulkar presents modern man in all his complexities. He portrays life as it is from different angles, without trying to moralize or
philosophize in any way. All the works contain a latent critique of modern Indian society, mostly middle-class and lower middle class, though from different angles.”

Tendulkar’s plays transcend the limits of time and clime. Fren B. Mee states: “I hope that each play will take people on a journey... however, the journey need not be to India. It can be a journey into one’s own self from a silence outside one’s cultural viewpoint.” Like Chekhov and Tagore, Tendulkar creates a kind of emotionally refined, integrated, united and conscious world. Wadikar aptly says: “Tendulkar’s art may be seen as liberating influence: It liberates us from our cribbed, cabined, and confined existence and helps us become, in the world, “human”----as human as possible.” By dramatizing injustice against women and their oppression and subjugation in the male-dominated society of his time, Tendulkar underlines his faith in human values such as understanding, compassion, liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy and social justice. The dramatist’s projection of life at its worst reveals his commitment to humanitarian values at their best. “One can discern, if one delves into the core of the play, the seeds of basic human values.”
REFERENCES


6 Ibid., 47.

7 Ibid., 48.


14 Banerjee, p.xvi.