UNVEILING
CHAPTER - III
UNVEILING

O! there be players that I have seen play,
and heard others praise, and that highly,
[... ] they imitated humanity. (Shakespeare Hamlet 118)

Theatre, according to Artaud, is the full scale invocation of cruelty, violence, and terror and he firmly asserts that, “theatre does not just spring from the text or work, but it should start from outside, from beyond the theatre, from life, and its cruelty itself” (Coelho 29). Writers, through the ages, have tried vehemently and valiantly “to depict and dissect the very core of this cruelty and violence that besets man at most moments in his collective and individual life” (Coelho 27). Vijay Tendulkar, greatly inspired by Artaud’s notions, has glued his eyes on this fundamental principle of an omnipotent cruel outer structure and believed that the latent pattern of all our experience in life was shaped by “dark forces - hectic, uncertain, cruel, and chaotic” (Coelho 30). He has been witnessing the defenceless state of the common man before the forces of aggression and arrogance, cruelty and corruption. The tyranny of the few over the many has long remained the unchanging fact and fate of the human condition. His compassionate nature cannot turn a complacent eye over the mute sufferings of fellow human beings and he has accomplished his feat by rousing the slumbering conscience of his audience by unveiling in his plays “spectacles of the most abominable forms of hatred, cruelty and violence” (Coelho 27) through highly realistic but peculiar characters.

In his aspiration to shudder the society, Tendulkar has boldly ventured with personages, who have to exhibit the goriest scenes and inconceivable arrogance. Tendulkar has sensed that the skill of characterization is a literary skill. Unlike in a novel, the characters in a play have to impress upon the audience within a few seconds from their entry into the dais. It is through their gait, dress, gesture, speech, and mannerisms, which help as a visual description, that they enchant the audience and hold them in thrall. With an efficient exploitation of such
traits, the characters can establish themselves as living and real persons and not as mere cardboard figures or as the mouth piece of the playwright. A play basically requires living characters who "speak in their separate personal style".

Tendulkar's plays lay bare "the unbridled violence of the human spirit let loose in murky dehumanized environment, whose only stable characteristic is social and individual unrest" (Coelho 32). The motive behind such a design is to show the degeneration of man who views scenes of extreme cruelty with almost total apathy. Ignoring the norms of common decency and behaviour, he has projected the innate violence of the so called civilized beings. Man's "taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his neurotic fantasies, his utopian sense of life and things, and even his cannibalism" (Coelho 31) are realistically portrayed through an artistic galaxy.

This uncommon artist, fine humorist, and perceptive satirist, has not only been the most productive creator "but has also introduced the greatest variations in his dramatic creations" (Banerjee xviii). The creative process is a highly complicated one for Tendulkar. Most of his protagonists happen to be real living beings either he has actually come into contact with at one point of time or whose existence has been reported to him. The moment he has envisioned the like of his characters in his creative eye, the innumerable details unintentionally stored in the mind germinate at their own pace, sprout, break open and assert their existence as inimitable characters. He confesses: "They are [. . .] living persons leading me into the thick of their lives where they would give me the theme. [. . .] They were not puppets; not the kings and queens on a chess-board whom I pushed and moved at my convenience, but living persons of distinction with their own minds, ways and destiny" (Tendulkar xxi). Dr. K. Balachandran confirms Tendulkar's statement with his comment "the art of Tendulkar reaches its absorbing complexity through his deft handling of characters and the "free play" status that they enjoy" (Dharan viii).

N.S. Dharan's exclamation in adoration discloses the fact that, "the greatest quality, which Tendulkar can claim to himself as a creative writer and dramatist, is his singular ability to
simultaneously involve and distance himself from his creations. This endows his work with infinite subtlety" (26-27). This is no exaggeration because Tendulkar himself exposes his involvement as well as detachment with his characters. He proclaims loudly:

They came to me from somewhere; they pressurized me to write, dogged me, persuaded me, compelled me, made life impossible for me at times and got themselves written. I was fully and totally immersed in the experience of writing; of acting out my characters on the paper. Living as them. Moving with the play. I was like a possessed soul most of the time as I wrote. (Tendulkar xxi-xxii)

After the pangs of creation, the exhausted playwright himself is shocked to notice the birth of such abominable creatures.

The portrayal of the trials and tribulations of people of all walks of life, ranging from a diplomatic king to a deranged person, lures the head and heart of the viewers. Tendulkar’s male protagonists, female protagonists, supporting characters and back stage characters are endowed with distinct features that impress as well as imprison the minds of the theatre-goers. This wide range of characters emote and evoke infinite emotions like pity, love, sorrowfulness, horror, terror, fear, awe, surprise, and shock, which simultaneously make a strong appeal to and appal all and sundry leaving them dazed due to the crude but real exposition of neglected aspects of life in all its rawness and nudity.

Tendulkar has depicted through his plays the prevalent gender disparity, power manipulation, and resultant violence. The characters sketched should befit the atrocities experimented and experienced. The roles of victimizer and victim are undertaken by male and female figures respectively in most of his plays and only in plays like Silence!, Kamala, and Encounter, the women are sparkling with fighting spirit and delineated as revolting against the injustices meted out. Since life, in reality, is a mixture of joys and sorrows and human being of divine and devil, Tendulkar’s men and women are neither epitomes of perfection nor paragons of virtues. They are common people with common as well as peculiar desires and itches making life miserable for others and themselves.
Tendulkar’s creative genius aspires to probe into the minds of his characters resulting in his deduction of a debauched person behind the gossamer veil of a debonair much to the horror and terror of the viewers. Most of his characters are misfits, who stagger the audience with their outrageous and ruthless activities. They neither evince any interest nor attach any importance to follow the social, moral, or religious doctrines of life. Individual’s will and pleasure, gratification and upliftment, and security and accomplishment take up the lead role pushing back the development of society or welfare of humanity. The result is, in the mad rat race, each moves hastily ignoring and brushing aside the damage made, but certainly deriving a sadistic delight in the suffering caused. Through a deep scrutiny, it can be ascertained that, the male characters, but for a few exceptions, are generally mono dimensional, flat, and static, while their female counterparts are multi-dimensional, round, and dynamic. The supporting characters ascertain their prominence with their choric functions and the backstage characters assert their inevitability by being instrumental in effecting significant changes in the lives of the protagonists.

In Tendulkar’s plays, men are exploiters of women and even those, who are conscious of their education, social status, and liberation, are no exceptions. Pressurized by the demands of the society and their own psychological needs, men cannot but be exploiters manipulating every opportunity to satisfy the demands of both the society and their own ego. The primary concern, in most of his plays is the failure of human relations due to man’s inherent cruelty to his fellowmen and also due to his concept of women, “as subjects to be exploited, as possessions, and not as individuals with feelings and desires of their own” (Madge 84).

The potent fury, inherent in the male figures, is either because of the latent impressions tattooed in their minds during their childhood days or of their various encounters with the society, which have exposed the ills and hypocritical attitudes of the society. Their pent up fury explodes at the earliest opportunity beating the innocent victims into pulp. They become inconsiderate and turn a blind eye to the inexplicable woes of the victims. The strangest behaviours of the protagonists can also be analyzed in terms of Maslow’s hierarchy
of needs. According to Maslow, every human being has inherently been striving to overcome needs at various levels which determine the individual's behavioural structure. The level of needs aspired reflects the existing state of the person. Driven by the various immediate personal and social needs, people of different social strategies like a student, binder, writer, socialist, journalist, an unaccomplished husband, actors, and politicians among the male figures formulate peculiar principles which not merely annoy and astound the audience but also acquaint them with the innumerable intricacies that complicate life. The females are nowhere regarded by them as individuals with their own specific needs and expectations but are treated as mere instruments to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

The merciless and inhuman treatment administered during the formative years of tender childhood days of Sakharam in Sakharam, Arun Athavale in Kanyadaan and Ramakant in The Vultures leave an indelible ugly scar in their minds and they, in turn, develop a callous disregard for the feelings of others. The denial of the protective care of the father and the deprivation of the warm affection of the mother have induced them to be arrogant, heartless, bestial, and barbaric in behaviour. Sakharam can never forget his mother's calling him a Maher born in a Brahmin home, the strongest disapproval his every act received, and the severest beatings his father unleashed upon him. In turn, he becomes "abusive, calculating, pitiless, drunkard and sadist to boot" (Kumar 25). There is a "streak of vengeance in his character against men in general and women in particular" (Chari 31). He treats women as mere disposable commodities.

Arun Athavale, the young dalit writer, roars like a furious lion over the humiliations experienced by his people in the hands of the high caste Brahmins. The pictures of his drunken father mercilessly beating his mother, his ancestors moving around with a load of shit on their heads, their begging for food and the stinking bread offered have their own imperishable influence on Arun and he pounces on his wife subjecting her to indescribable violence since she is a Brahmin by birth.
Ramakant, like his siblings, has been nurtured by Hari Pitale, who is himself immoral, dishonest, inhuman, and heartless. The father has never intended to adopt any virtues in his life and is shameless about his vicious and fiendish ways. Born and brought up in such a vindictive family, Ramakant naturally remains self-centred, ruthless, malicious, and vengeful. His efforts through illegal devices do not earn him success. His inability to impregnate his wife and to establish his economic status forces him to be brutal in words and deeds.

Such an unpleasant childhood makes these persons feel ill at ease and their lives proclaim the real complexity and irrationality of the human mind. Even Tendulkar admits, “Such people have pent-up fury, a very strong grievance against the society. Their anger looks for an occasion to burst out, and gets misdirected when it does not find an outlet” (Rangra 6). These characters intensely desire that “their egos should manifest themselves freely and strongly” (Barve 24) and at the slightest hindrance, they are terribly annoyed. Tendulkar “harps upon the isolation of the individual and his confrontation with the hostile surroundings” (Dass 68) through such portrayals.

Even before Sakharam makes his entry trumpeting his eccentric ways of life, it is his stentorian voice that paves way for an electrifying start. He proudly admits, “I’m hot-headed. When I lose my temper, I beat the life out of people. I’ve a foul mouth [. . .] I’m a rascal, a womanizer, a pauper” (125-26). His awareness, that the body has its appetites and insatiable itch, forces him to look for destitutes and brings home one and lives with her so long as the arrangement goes on smoothly. He believes himself to be their saviour and very strongly condemns their husbands for their dictatorial attitude and hypocrisy, but is in no way different from the husbands, who are wife beaters and authoritative. With his unorthodox ways, he challenges and negates the society refusing to accept its norms. He openly implements what he thinks right. This insensitive megalomaniac has exposed “for the first time the hidden filth of the society. So mercilessly striking at its false value system that the
custodians of the society were shaken to their roots and labelled the play as pornographic” (Rangra 4).

This “sex-starved creature”, with his own personal and peculiar laws of morality, is an outcaste living his own kind of life “with perverted tastes. He is busy netting the outcastes of the opposite sex and keeping them with him as his concubines” (Nadkarni 39). His inhuman demands with a demure like Laxmi and his arrogant compulsion forcing Champa to consume liquor, otherwise she remains a frigid, reflect his unfulfilled physiological need. The plight of Champa is to be seen in figure 12. His eagerness to exercise his highhandedness over others demanding instantaneous obedience is only to feel quite secure and to command the respect of his dependents. He is a bundle of contradictions. His ill-treatment of Laxmi and his helpless slavery to Champa exemplify that. Though he openly denounces Gods, his innate faith in them is also hinted at. He is inwardly a coward but tries to “cover up his cowardice, helplessness, and his loneliness behind a mask of aggressive boastfulness and animal behaviour” (Dharan 71).

Sakharam’s faith and pride in his “self minted morality” make him be oblivious of the society and its norms. He satisfies his ego by asserting his supremacy over the weak Laxmi. He treats Laxmi so sadistically because, “his is the reaction of insensitive brute strength and energy to the defenceless” (Singh 32). The slow transformation, from an incorrigible hedonist to a god-fearing man under the influence of Laxmi and his awareness of it, result in ditching Laxmi because he does not prefer to turn a new leaf. Quite ironically once Champa, the buxom, enters his life, his whole personal code starts foundering. “From the commanding heights of the master of the house, he is begging her for favours. From a rapist, he turns into a groveling old man” (Paul 56).

The “licentious sexual mono-maniac” Sakharam is too obsessed and infatuated with Champa’s sexual magnetism. She casually remarks about Dawood as “he is nice” which sows the seed of jealousy in Sakharam. The man, who prides about his liberal ways and his
contractual co-existence, cannot conceive or digest the slipshod ways of Champa. Her condemnation terribly perturbs him and Laxmi’s revelation of Champa’s affair with Dawood drives him mad with fury. The violent Sakaram goes to his victim with the “directness and ferocity of a predatory animal” (Singh 36) and he strangles her to death. Sakharam’s unruly behaviour is assessed by Thakurdas and he comments:

Sakharam turns a rebel against the hypocrisy of the affluent or his own class and their double standards of sexual morals; flaunting his virility as a make believe to compensate for his inner weakness and loneliness, only to be shocked later by its transient nature. Sexual strength is a deceptive substitute for moral strength, whose roots he has foiled to discover in his experience or psyche. There is vivacious Champa, who is a foil to expose ... Sakharam’s vaunted self-deception and unconscious weakness, both sexual and moral. His strangling her to death, on which the play rightly ends, is a woeful admission of the failure of what he had worked out to be his philosophy of life and living. (55-56)

Sakharam, despite his proclamation as a social rebel, has always been, for all his rhetoric, a “man of straw” (Singh 36). When such a man commits a murder on impulse, the natural reaction is a ‘dazed shock and loss of volition’. As he is in a catatonic trance, he is unable to rise to the demanding occasion. Laxmi’s fortitude binds him with her and he is found to be the “most die-hard reactionary and the play descends into becoming a pathetic tale of a conservative of the deepest dye” (Madge 15).

Like Sakharam, who has not cared to hide any of his shortcomings from the public vicinity, Arun Athavale, in Kanyadaan, also openly admits and justifies his unruly manners. With very carefully and tactfully measured steps, he has cornered Jyoti, daughter of the progressive minded brahmin socialist parents, and entrapped her by indirectly imposing marriage with him. Their wedding is not the result of mutual love or trust or faith. Each marries the other with a mission to accomplish. Jyoti attempts in earnestness to straighten Arun’s loutishness and to uplift his social status but Arun, who feels Jyoti’s brahmin feminity
as a challenge to his dalit masculinity, determines to "subdue, conquer her- and through her, her family, thereby score some points for his community" (Prasad 14).

The humiliations experienced from time immemorial by his sect, its servile attitude, and miserable existence make Arun truculent in words and deeds. His association with Jyoti is deemed to be the golden opportunity to give vent to his vengeful attitude towards the upper class. According to him it is a jolly game that he has caught a brahmin dame and his angry impulses to strangle throats, rape, and kill can be legally experimented with Jyoti, a representative of the class.

Arun appears in person only in three scenes. The audience first encounter him when he comes with Jyoti to meet his prospective in-laws. He is least perturbed about creating a good impression. His expressions that only pansies enter the kitchen and big houses frighten him clearly bring out his incompatibility, inability to acclimatize with the upper class, and unwillingness to transform. He is very crude and cruel in the use of his tongue and hand. At the slightest provocation, he twists hard Jyoti’s arm and cites his dalit manners as the cause for his turbulent manners. When interviewed by Seva, Jyoti’s mother, his haughty reply foreshadows his obnoxious and abominable nature. With determined obstinacy and malicious happiness, he torments the mother and the brother with his biting and sarcastic expressions. His audacity emboldens him to command Jyoti, “You don’t know a shit, Shut up” (517), even before he is approved of by Jyoti’s people.

During his second appearance which is after the marriage, Arun goes to Jyoti’s home, fully drunk, claiming Jyoti, who is tormented to an unendurable extent. He sees “gender violence of all kinds as legitimate vents to generational anger” and through his brutal acts proves not to be “a namby-pamby liberal” (Prasad 14). Instead of regretting his boorishness and rude behaviour, he justifies them as the genuine or natural manner of a scavenger. When interrogated by Seva regarding his inhuman treatment of Jyoti, he, “exhibitionistically declares his love for Jyoti” and instructs Seva, “to look at his love and not at his beating” (Gosavi 161). Nath has voluntarily turned blind to his follies and condones Arun’s ill-
treatment of Jyoti as the result of the harsh environment in which he has been groomed. He is still optimistic and longs for absolute success of the precious experiment.

Arun makes his last appearance, when Seva is pouring out the atrocities meted by their pregnant daughter. The baffled Nath is unable to comprehend the difference between the arrogant man who makes others suffer and the aesthetic mind that creates. He exclaims in agony, "Such behaviour towards a pregnant wife! [ . . . ] Here in these pages he describes the humiliations he has gone through with extraordinary sensitivity [ . . . ] and the same man kicks his pregnant wife on her belly? How . . . ?" (543). It is extremely difficult for an honest man like Nath to believe that the victims of violence derive peculiar enjoyment by perpetrating the same brutal violence upon others.

At this juncture of events, Arun enters in order to invite his father-in-law to chair the discussion session on his autobiography. With his characteristic temerity and shamelessness, under the guise of invitation, he hoodwinks Nath. He is both cunning and bold. He lays the trap openly by checkmating Nath. If Nath refuses to step in, Arun can denounce him as a casteist and thus damage his public image. If he accepts, he has to sing the glory of Arun's book by doing which "he will be legitimizing Arun and his actions" (Gosavi 164). Arun thus buttonholes Nath and achieves his task hands down. Sakharam, in Sakharam at least, is defeated, disheartened, and dazed in the end, but Arun remains unrepentant till the end and emerges triumphant making life miserable for others. This sensitive writer is in reality an insensitive human being.

Arun's marriage with Jyoti fulfils his physiological, safety, and esteem needs. The esteem need prompts him to be a creative writer, which has captivated Jyoti's heart and won her for him. Despite his irresponsibility, indignation, laziness, and brutality, he manages to attain the heights of a celebrated writer because of his wife's power of endurance and commitment. Arun's general behaviour, biased attitude towards his upper class wife, his inconsiderate negligence for her sufferings, his foul language, and his fierce public denunciation of her parents at once bring to one's mind Osborne's angry young man, Jimmy Porter. Osborne, in
his *Look Back in Anger*, has clearly exhibited that the class conflict that colours Jimmy’s outlook on life so profoundly is responsible for his incompatibility with society and unhappiness. He earnestly wishes for a complete change in his wife’s attitude towards life and his frustrations and disappointments get their outlet through his stinging remarks. Arun, on the other hand, despite Jyoti’s fusion with his class and its culture, is unable to treat her as his better half and with all his education and creative talent, he is unwilling as well as unable to change his perception of life.

Ramakant, in *The Vultures*, lacks the diplomacy and shrewdness of Arun. He is a man of brutal words and deeds with no deftness to achieve in life. Throughout the play, he expresses two intense desires, one to father a child and the other to be endowed with all material comforts in life so as to be esteemed as a man in the society, but in vain. Through his deceitful designs against and with his family members, Tendulkar has “brilliantly satirized the morals and ridiculous tensions of modern Indian life” (Nabar 19). The illegitimate son, Rajaninath’s words powerfully portray the irredeemable nature of the characters. He regrets, “My blood’s corrupt. It’s in the family. First your blood rots, then your brain decays. And then, throughout the body, it’s as if a wild animal’s rampaging. Thirsting for blood. Your humanity itself gets destroyed” (238).

Ramakant is in no way distinct from his father or brother or sister. The “ferocity, ruthlessness, avarice and cunningness of the vulture is inherent in all the members of Pappa’s family” (Dharan 75). They use obscene language, which is suggestive of their incestuous nature. His father, through treacherous means, wrests the company from his brother who had been sweating all along for its establishment, growth, and development. “As the seed, so the tree!” (211) and consequently the children turn out to be secretive and deceptive and like the father endeavour to achieve by hook or by crook.

Ramakant is desperate about his failures and losses but fails to acknowledge his inefficiency and incapability. He mutters, “Impossible to get money by the sweat of your brow! Suicide to work hard, dammit!” (236). His unwed sister’s pregnancy rejuvenates his
fallen spirit and with great gumption and enthusiasm, he proposes to break Manik’s leg in order to extract a handsome ransom by blackmailing the Raja of Hondur, Manik’s lover. Rajaninath’s observation, “so cruel, they’d put the wolves to shame” (223) proves accurate because, the brothers consider the pregnancy as a windfall to earn and not as a downfall to perish. Soon after the conception of the demonic device to make hay while the sun shines, Ramakant’s dehumanized bestial impulse, in high spirits, dreams about appointing a cook and buying a car, thus exposing his utter selfishness, heartlessness, and insensitivity.

Later, despite his intense longing to have a baby of his own, Ramakant does not shudder but with vengeance succeeds in aborting the growing life in Manik’s womb. He, like Umakant, his brother, is cruel, indecent, greedy, and bestial. More than the cruel acts, it is the way, their conceived notions are nurtured and relished, that proves the conviction “that the vulturine instinct in man is deeply rooted” (Dani 114). He is highly superstitious. His belief in the saints is used as a shield to protect himself against the charge of impotency. His boundless happiness due to Rama’s conception cannot last long. Once the seed of suspicion is sown, he grows restless and expresses his brutal plan to destroy the foetus. A.P. Dani rightly comments:

The Vultures is a dramatization of deep-seated unmitigated depravity, perversity, greed and diabolic villainy reflected in the ravenous members of a middle-class family. These characters symbolizing the rapacious vultures, and betraying their avarice, vices and immorality evince the repulsive sensuality and domestic violence, manifesting the infernal atrocities of devilishness. (113)

When achievement becomes a very hard earned task even for honest and virtuous people, it becomes naturally unattainable or evanescent for these “lost violent souls”. Rajaninath’s following prophetic words, foreshadowing their impending doom, make the reader-viewer panicky. He predicts, “For they have no other / Future left to them. / There is no hope . . . / There is no escape for them . . . / Or for anyone . . .” (265).
Sakharam, Arun Athavale and Ramakant behave inhumanely owing to their unhappy childhood, selfish designs, and various needs. Tendulkar’s other male characters, namely Nath in *Kanyadaan*, Jaisingh Jadav in *Kamala* and Bapu in *A Friend’s Story* are depicted as unselfish. They have been fighting against the vile practices in the society with a view to redress the afflictions of people. The course of sincere efforts never does run smooth and during their strenuous attempts, their encounters with hard nuts to crack make them lose their level headedness. These champions, while fighting for the rights of others, lose theirs and turn out to be miserable victims.

Nath, an idealist to the bone marrow, dreams of a casteless Utopian society. Prompted by transcendent need, he aspires to establish equality at all levels among humanity. Jaisingh, motivated to be self-actualized, risks carving a niche for him in investigative journalism. Bapu, brushing aside his humiliations and shortcomings, genuinely wishes to make Mitra happy. Irrespective of their philanthropic attitude, they nevertheless are defeated, disheartened, and dejected. Their bitter experiences prove that it is unwise to render service to the undeserving or extend one’s helping hand to the unsolicited.

Nath, the repairer of the world, is committed to the cause of the upliftment of the untouchables. Sensing the abject misery of the Dalits, he exerts himself to uproot this evil. His ideals are dearer to him than anything else. He grows ecstatic at Jyoti’s intention to marry a dalit and pours out: “Seva, until today, ‘Break the caste system’ was a mere slogan for us. [. . .] But today I have broken the caste barrier in the real sense. My home has become Indian in the real sense of the term. I am happy today. Very happy” (519). The idealist in him overpowers the father and even after Seva’s report about Arun’s barbaric manners, he defends him saying, “[. . .] he is a dalit. He has been brought up in the midst of poverty and hatred. These people’s psychological make-up is altogether different. . . . We must try to understand him and that is extremely difficult” (523). He encourages his daughter because girls like Jyoti can only melt and mould such persons, who are like unrefined gold. He deems this a ‘precious experiment’, and can not allow that to crumble into dust.
The essential goodness and gentleness of Nath is indicated by his gracious treatment of the unscrupulous dalit son-in-law, Arun. All along, he has been lured and ruled not by facts, but principles. At last, when Arun’s hypocrisy and vengeful attitude are clearly revealed, despite Nath’s awareness that Arun is no saviour of the society but a canker eating into its very soul, he cannot deplore his dreadful behaviour but only make “a glowing speech, showering accolades on” (Gosavi 164) Arun’s autobiography, lest Arun should torment his daughter more. This move destroys Jyoti’s belief and image of her father as an unflinching idealist. Rebuking his insincerity she comments, “Your speech today was not only lousy, it was a hireling’s speech” (562).

Nath, who has been castigating himself for his utter helplessness and hypocritical task, is further tormented by Jyoti’s discovery and bitter accusation. She condemns him for having inculcated in them great ideals by which he has done permanent psychological damage to his children. In Jyoti’s image from being an uncompromising idealist, he is reduced to a heartless kidnapper of his own children “psychologically mutilating” them for ever. Hence Jyoti rejects him and her rejection of him as her philosopher, guide, mentor, and more painfully as her father, shatters him to the roots resulting in his descend into a disillusioned realist from being an undaunted idealist.

Jaisingh Jadav, an investigative journalist in Kamala, craves to venture and accomplish tasks undreamt of by others. In this field of “High Speed” journalism, eyewitness report plays a vital role. Wherever there is “murder, bloodshed, rape, atrocity or arson”, he risks visiting those spots and makes a sensational report about it. His relative Kakasaheb says, “This isn’t manliness. It’s madness” (7), but Jaisingh believes that he renders a wonderful service to the nation. His convictions are:

There’s a commitment behind it, there’s a social purpose. [...] In the moral rot that’s set in - in this country, someone’s got to uphold moral principles, moral norms, and moral values. Someone has got to hold back the uncontrolled license of those who have the machinery of power in their hands. The weak and the backward sections of
society are under attack. [...] The common man is living in a - a kind of unconscious haze today. He needs to be shocked into looking at the truth now and then. We need a force that will raise his consciousness, prepare him to struggle for social and political change. (23-24)

His dedication and commitment to his profession earns him great recognition and he is a celebrated journalist being envied by others. Ironically, in reality, this young enthusiastic journalist, who is proud of his championing the cause of the suffering lot, has absolute disregard for the feelings and expectations of others.

Jaisingh plays the roles of a committed journalist, husband, master, friend, and nephew, but nowhere one can trace traits of genuine affection, compassion, sympathy, empathy, or fellow-feeling. As a journalist, he astounds everyone by his accomplishments. He is adventurous, shrewd, and tactful. Though he proclaims to redress the afflictions of the underdogs, the original motive is "to capitalize on the flesh trade in order to further succeed in the career without caring, in the least, for the victims of this nefarious trade in a democratic country like India" (Dharan 40-41).

As Sarita's husband and Kamala's master, Jaisingh imposes his will and authority over them. He is selfish, malicious, secretive, and hypocritical, traits typical of a male chauvinist. His wife is extremely sensitive to his needs and tastes and with immense enthusiasm and eagerness she pampers his whims and fancies. Jaisingh, on the contrary, is uncaring and inconsiderate. She is not his confidant and he never acquaints her with regard to his whereabouts. He fails to recognize the feeling heart that willingly caters to all his needs - physical, emotional, intellectual, and social.

Jaisingh has bought Kamala from Luharthaga Bazaar, not to release or liberate a victim but to prove the existence of flesh trade. His botheration and excitement over the conduct of the press conference successfully is more to present himself as a super hero than to unmask the atrocity for public vicinity. His inhuman quality is flashed through his flat refusal to permit Kamala change her ragged garment.
Jaisingh’s replies and reactions to Kakasaheb’s queries and comments once again affirm his self-centredness and headstrong disposition. His drunken revelry with Jain after the significant press conference exposes in crystal clear terms the fiendish delight enjoyed by the omnipotent master over the helpless slave. “It carves him out as a sharp opportunist who uses sensational scoops to be in the limelight” (Jain 101). The excruciating pain that his actions caused on others is experienced by him only when his proprietor Sheth Singhania humiliates, squashes, and victimizes him by sacking him out of his job. This high spirited and ambitious journalist, in the end turns out to be a dispirited, disillusioned, and hapless individual. His deep psychological needs at that moment are, “to fuse, merge, feel loved and reassured” (Jain 104), which are at once grasped and granted by Sarita.

In Kamala, the inglorious result yielded by Jaisingh’s selfish endeavours, has been effectively brought out by Tendulkar. Bapu, of A Friend’s Story, on the other hand, willingly bears the cross for the sake of his friendship to Sumitra Dev. His pride and happiness in becoming Mitra’s friend, his delight in being her confidant, his bafflement at the disclosure of her peculiar nature, his shock at her suicidal attempt, his sympathy on her problem, his wonder at her marvelous resilience, his uneasiness at her demands, his helplessness and servile surrender to her commanding will help the readers understand that his world revolves around her. Through depicting his earnestness to correct her, his impotent fury at her incorrigible blatant nature, his disillusionment at her dishonest ways, his estrangement and extrication from her due to her meticulous manipulation of him, his afflictions at her downfall and finally his mental turmoil with the sharp sting of conscience at Mitra’s death, Tendulkar has revealed his traits as an individual.

Bapu, generally deemed a weakling, proves to be more individualistic, analytical, and practical than Mitra, who poses to be head strong, haughty, and very bold. He has been extending his helping hand to Mitra and proves to be a friend in need. He is not merely unselfish but is humane in behaviour. Though he disapproves of Mitra’s demand and feels uneasy about helping her, he does not forsake her. He never insists or imposes his views and
suggestions but meekly concurs with her and contributes to her happiness. Mitra too confides everything in him as if he were her God.

Bapu endures patiently not only Mitra’s remonstrations but the humiliations her thoughtless selfish actions lead to. For example, her anonymous letters imitating Bapu’s handwriting make Dalvi, Nama’s lover, thrash Bapu brutally and insult him publicly. In spite of Bapu’s earnest request and sincere advice, Mitra’s flight to Calcutta following the tracks of her prey, Nama, makes him flabbergasted and apprehensive. He realizes that he is only a doormat to be used at need and kicked aside when not needed. His feeling, “she has made an ass of me. I was deceived, hoodwinked completely” (487) grows stronger. When Mitra’s condescending behaviour cream off, his power of endurance breaks and he launches a bitter diatribe against her and firmly declines to help her in the name of friendship. This outright rejection and denunciation shake the audacious Mitra inducing her to commit suicide leaving Bapu hazy and crest fallen.

Sakharam, Arun, and Ramankant rejoice at their atrocious behaviour and do not lament over their inhuman attitudes. Nath, Jaisingh Jadav, and Bapu, on the contrary, aspire to be great idealists but cannot help descending from the idealistic orbit to realistic zone due to their encounters with the complexities of life. While Sakharam, Arun, Ramakant, and Jaisingh have been exercising their power and authority in their limited jurisdiction over the other inhabitants, Nath and Bapu too, though are very sensitive, sympathetic, and kind, in the name of service and friendship thrust their notions on others and they not only curb the chances of others to exhibit themselves but also expose their own hypocritical stands.

These men, with their limited power, try to rule over others turning a blind eye and deaf ear to the tears and cries of others. When endowed with unlimited power and authority, the transformation taking place even in a humble, servile poor man is deftly portrayed by Tendulkar in Ghashiram. Mirajkar feels that the theme of Ghashiram has all time relevance. Neela Bhalla’s observation throws light on the characters of Ghashiram, Nana and The Brahmins of Pune. According to her, “While Ghashiram portrays the two characteristics of
violence and bestiality, Nana and his Brahmin Coterie symbolize lasciviousness and lust on the one hand and self-interested manipulation in power strategies on the other” (ii). Nana Phadnavis and Ghashiram are, in a sense, all pervasive. They are the “two facets of evil, complementing and contrasting each other. [. . .] Their crimes originate in an overpowering desire for revenge and control in one and lust in the other” (Bhalla 12). While Ghashiram takes all measures to rise in the esteem of people, Nana’s need is physiological.

Ghashiram, a Kanoj Brahmin, is very humble, servile, and highly helpful in the beginning. His unsuccessful attempt to find a suitable job, forces him to work in courtesan Gulabi’s house. She discloses, “He dances with me. He was a foreigner. He washes my utensils. Sings for me. Does all sorts of things” (370). Despite his loyalty, he is ill-treated. His refusal to hand over the pearl necklace, gifted by Nana Phadnavis in appreciation of the timely extended hands that hold Nana’s sprained foot, as seen in figure 13, annoys Gulabhi. She snatches it by force and throws him out with the help of her thugs. Humiliated and disheartened, the haggard Ghashiram waits to collect the gifts offered by the Peshwa. Charged with the crime of theft, he is further harassed and insulted. He is imprisoned and severely beaten and subjected to verbal assassination too. He is literally kicked out of the prison and a soldier chides him thus: “Get lost. Hey! thief, monkey. If you so much as put a foot in the holy city of Poona, You’ll lose your head. Go away. Take your ugly face and go far away. Don’t come back to Poona. Not even your shadow should fall on the city of Poona. Get lost. Go” (17). Ghashriam is “spurned, hurt, humiliated and victimized” (Bhalla 95).

Constant humiliations add insult to injury and the suppressed fury unleashes the ‘inner instinct of violence’ to take its own shape. Overpowered with a vengeful desire, he baits Nana with his only daughter Lalita Gauri and attains Kotwalship. The helpless and powerless Savaldas becomes the authoritative and omnipotent Kotwal. The bitter humiliations experienced at successive sequences drain Ghashiram off all humane qualities
and with the characteristic vengeance of a wounded tiger, he executes his power to the horror and dismay of the people. The taste of revenge is so sweet that he perpetrates one excess after another. "His tyrannies are used to assuage his own guilt and every blow that he strikes against hapless victims is a vindication to him of the crime against his daughter" (Bhalla 95).

From the day he assumed power as the Kotwal, his inhuman persecution of the people gains momentum. The people, caught between Scylla and Charybdis, find life miserable, unendurable and awful. Arresting a Brahman on the charge of theft and ignoring his pleading, he frightens and forces him to undergo the ordeal of holding red-hot iron ball in his hands to prove his innocence. He turns discourteous and heartless and is least perturbed by the groans of the innocent Brahman who writhes in agony. Due to his constant and alert vigilance, crimes have decreased and revenues have increased but people have lost their peace of mind and happiness.

People shudder at the very mention of Ghashiram's name. He would like to give his dearest daughter in marriage while enjoying the glory of limitless power itself, because later she may be demeaned as an immoral woman. His inhuman efforts to straighten out Poona succeed but in the course of which he loses his daughter. Lady Macbeth undertakes a guilt trip because of her own turbulent conscience and is estranged from her existing environment. Even in that deranged state, she exclaims, "All the perfumes in Arabia cannot sweeten these little hands, Oh!" (81), but Ghashiram never regrets over what he has done to the innocent victims. A common man like Joe Keller in All My Sons, regrets over his heinous crime and since the wages of sin is death, he welcomes it whole heartedly. Though Ghashiram is deeply moved and feels miserable at the untimely death of Gauri, he fails to realize that it is the outcome of his selfish will, but blames only Nana Phadnavis for her brutal end.

Nana Phadnavis remains defiant and skilfully manages the murderous approach of Ghashiram. The afflicted father's anger is observed in figure 14. Nana cows him down with the following
assurance and allowance:

Life is a dance of four day’s charm. One must do one’s duty. That’s enough. I am the Chief Minister. You are the Kotwal. These are our duties . . . The responsibility of all Poona is yours alone [. . .] Before you go, don’t forget to bow [. . .] Your reputation is our reputation. Anyone’s saying strange things about the Peshwa’s Kotwal would be unbrahmanical. [. . .] If you hear a gossip monger, don’t wait a second longer – cut off his head!” (405-06).

This venomous inducement and its impact are easily perceptible through figure 15. Gauri’s death, his helplessness about it, and the blanket permission to be tyrannical in his duty result in Ghashiram’s attempt to create pandemonium in Poona.


The meekest Savaldas when turned into the mightiest Kotwal develops a penchant for human blood and manages the entire scene with an iron hand and heart. His thirst for revenge changes into a “raw lust for cruelty”. Ghashiram’s head strong inhuman behaviour has ultimately brought the brutal end. Like Lacerates, who regrets in Hamlet, “the treacherous instrument is in thy hand, the unabated and envenom’d. The foul practice/ Hath turn’d itself on me; Lo! Here I lie / Never to rise again” (102), Ghashiram too reaps in accordance with what he has sown. “Ghashiram’s degradation traces the path from a
vengeful soul to a ruthless manipulator to a savage cruel tyrant to a demonic bloodthirsty animal” (Mirajkar 89).

Ghashiram is, thus, depicted as an “embodiment of the instinct of violence” whereas Nana is found to be “an embodiment of libido” (Mallikarjuna 85) all through the play. Through Nana’s portrayal as a lecher with an overpowering weakness for women, which is colourfully projected in figure 16, the playwright has very brilliantly focused on “the corruption, cruelty and inhuman strategies embedded in the power games where women and religion are also exploited” (Reddy 60). Nana, the shameless lecher and shrewd manipulator is also a scheming villain and seasoned politician. With his crafty, cunning, and Machiavellian ways, he gathers greater power day by day and emerges unconquerable and undefeatable. His success is due to his direct access to his subjects, active participation in the festivities, deceitful ways to achieve, insensitivity, callous disregard for the consequences, and diplomatic deputation of power which never sneak out his true self. Nana’s efficient power manipulation is exemplified with the following words of Bandyopadyay: “Like ceremony, both religious and secular, the deceptions of deputation constitute yet another device of power. The real power uses the masks of deputation to mediate the exercise of power, to hide from the victims the real face of power so that all resistance is effectively deflected” (vi).

Nana has been thus successfully managing by hiding the perpetrator from the eyes of the victim and remains to be regarded as the saviour of the people. His scrupulous plan enables him to achieve many things at a single stroke. He appoints Ghashiram, the Kotwal of Poona in order to obtain Gauri to satisfy his lasciviousness. He proposes to accomplish many undreamt tasks through the same move. To quote his own utterance, “We made you Kotwal. Raise hell if you wish [. . .] that our misdeeds will be credited to your account. We do it; our Kotwal pays for it. The opportunity comes in the shape of Ghashiram. And that luscious peach is at hand to be devoured by Nana” (384-385).
Gauri’s death does not disturb Nana in the least except that it leads to his venturing another marriage with “a just - this - year ripened bride” (400) and figure 17 displays the wedding. He is a “bloody, bawdy villain! Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain! Smiling damned villain!” (Shakespeare 108). When Ghashiram rushes in craving for vengeance after Gauri’s death, Nana, with inimitable diplomacy turns Ghashiram a ‘pigeon – liver’d’ by citing and imposing his power and authority on him. A roaring lion is subdued and reduced to a hapless mewing cat and this degeneration is plainly visible in figure 18. Nana brings Ghashiram under his thumb very easily by sounding highly philosophical, affirming the transient nature of life and quenches his thirst for revenge by reaffirming the much coveted power as the Kotwal of Poona. Nana typical like “the people of the higher rungs of the society, uses religious ideology to justify the hierarchy of power, the unjust oppression, and exploitation” (Babu 70).

Nana’s deftness in managing the power game is once again unfolded when the angry mob corners him. Knowing that the past is irredeemable and his future has to be built on the irrevocable past, he takes a momentary and momentous decision. “In the shifting game of power, it is only a temporary adjustment that Nana exploits as long as necessary and can drop unceremoniously the moment it has served its purpose” (Bandyopadhyay v-vi). He realizes that Ghashiram would not be of any use any more and orders the mob to humiliate him as they want. The instinct of violence that has been restrained and suppressed in great horror and terror, floods out the moment Nana’s green signal is received. Nana sustains his glorious position by applauding the atrocities of the violent mob. Like King Creon in Antigone, he forbids proper burial to Ghashiram’s dead body and sanctions great celebration. He pats them on their back saying, “A disease has been controlled. The demon Ghashya Kotwal, who has plagued all of us has met his death. Let the corpse of sinful Ghasya rot [. . .]. Who ever attempts to take away this corpse will be punished. [. . .] We have commanded that there
be festivities for three days to mark this happy occasion" (415-16). By executing Ghashiram, he tactfully turns the situation to dual advantage. He pacifies the enraged mob and also comes “through as the upholder of justice and goodness” (Bhalla 97).

Seeing the hilarious crowd and the festive mood, visually displayed in figure 19, Nana heaves a great sigh of relief, for he has blissfully rid himself of a Kotwal who endangered and shook his stable position.

Nana Phadnavis is endowed with all the vital traits required for a ruler. This devil can cite scripture for his purpose. He is an evil soul with a smiling cheek, a goodly apple rotten at the heart, making anyone exclaim, “O, What a goodly outside falsehood hath!” (Shakespeare 33). He is “the ace manipulator who makes Ghashiram the fall guy” (Bhalla 96). Like the tragic heroes of Shakespeare, Nana too has a flaw, but it proves to be fatal for others. His insatiable physiological urge, fused with cunning, corrupt, and immoral devices, chases after fleeting pleasure which gets gratified because of his empowerment as the Chief Minister.

“Selfishness, that seeks happiness with no consideration for the happiness of others or that tramples on and destroys the rightful interests of others for its own ends, proliferates unhappiness” (Yogananda 126) but in Nana’s case, unhappiness for others.

An analysis of the behavioural pattern of the male protagonists of Vijay Tendulkar clearly reveals that they have developed a callous disregard for the feelings and sentiments of others owing to the latent dark impressions registered in the childhood days, the commitment to the profession, the ideals held dearer than life, the roles assumed and the various needs. These men make loud proclamations asserting their superiority over others and their furious words and deeds result in their violent behaviour. While there is a perceptible change in the attitude of a few towards the end, others remain the same though are dazed and dumbstruck at the boomerang effect their acts have led to. Some repent over their misdeeds whereas others are unrepentant and fail to realize their shortcomings and rectify themselves.
Most of these male figures thrust their will and impose their authority over their female dependants. Women are expected to be willing torch bearers and mute sufferers with an instantaneous readiness to bear the cross. Tendulkar has acquired a rare insight into the intricacies of female psyche and in his plays one can find a massive output of his alert and observant self. Dr. Balachandran states, “Tendulkar’s plays are the affirmations of the fact that the so-called stereo-type women of India have their own complexities and are elusive to any attempt of definition. They are mystifyingly complex and baffle their male counterparts” (Dharan viii).

Tendulkar’s plays are “gyno-centric”. The female protagonists are “so luminous that their roles eclipse those roles played by the man figuring in them” (Dharan 28). Even the dramatic action gains in intensity mainly because of the crucial and leading roles played by these women in a world apparently dominated by male chauvinists. Tendulkar has not proclaimed himself as a feminist, but treats his women characters with immense understanding and great compassion “while pitting them against men who are selfish, hypocritical and brutally ambitious” (Dharan 28).

Tendulkar’s female protagonists range from an empowered queen to hapless destitute. His plays delineate the problems of a queen, a lesbian, a career woman, a voluptuous person, unwed mothers, married but childless women, ideal social activists, and helpless destitutes. Despite variation in their roles, women are expected to suffer in silence subjecting themselves to the collective forces of female subordination like sexual differentiation, denial of social and economical privileges, and restrictive patterns of behaviours. Perceiving the agonies of existence, they are forced to quietly withdraw into their own worlds. Tendulkar, an astute interpreter of life, explores the emotional world of women revealing, a rare awareness of various deeper forces at work and a profound understanding of feminine sensibility as well as psychology.

The male figuring in Tendulkar’s art “emerge as puerile creatures for they are embodiments of hypocrisy, selfishness and treachery” (Dharan 98) and their verbal and
physical assaults expose their inherent malice. Consequently women, the dependents, naturally become helpless victims of the conspiracies hatched and atrocities executed.

Women are mercilessly harassed but the consoling factor is the depiction of women as strong willed, except in Mitra’s case, individuals making constant efforts to resist, endure and if possible to overcome the innumerable trials and tribulations. Shanta Gokhale observes:

As characters, Tendulkar’s women are among the most convincing in Indian theatre. They are not romanticized, idealized or forced to live by their creator’s symbolic purposes. They are first and foremost human beings of flesh and blood who draw their features from the widest range of observed examples. They are allowed to inhabit the entire spectrum from the unbelievably gullible to the clever, from the malleable to the stubborn, from the conservative to the rebellious, from the self-sacrificing to the grasping. (Choudhury 81)

Except in Ghashiram and Encounter, in the remaining plays under perusal, women are depicted in pair, thereby bringing out and projecting the sharp contrast between them and their complex nature respectively. Leela Benare and Mrs. Kashikar in Silence!, Laxmi and Champa in Sakharam, Mitra and Nama in A Friend’s Story, Sarita and Kamala in Kamala, Rama and Manik in The Vultures and Jyoti and Seva in Kanyadaan function as foil to each other emphasizing as well as enhancing their unique traits. The subtle nuances and differences, experienced and observed among people in real life, are effectively captured and depicted in all its multiplicity and variety.

Leela Benare, a teacher, is actually an independent and a self-actualized woman as far as her economic status is concerned. Mrs. Kashikar, whose actual name is no where mentioned, which signifies that she is to be identified only with relation to her husband, depends solely upon her husband’s charity for her sustenance. Through these two women, the various factors that intervene, determine, and shape the lives of single and married women are adroitly brought out. V.S. Pathak, comments thus:

Vijay Tendulkar has unerringly presented a microcosm of the generic reality of
female psyche by dramatizing the cognitive dissonance overtaking a naive and
gregarious girl, who quite naturally displays a train of polar, emotional and
behavioural reactions, as diverse as remonstration and supplication, fulmination and
succumbing, repugnance and unctuousness, reprobation and acquiescence, when
she is subpoenaed as a convict in the chauvinistic court of law in contravention of
the moral code meant strictly for women and entrenched by sanctimonious tradition
redolent of male chicanery. (10)

Benare as a person is sprightly, courageous, rebellious, assertive, sharp, strong-willed,
hilarious, and tactful. She is also a good singer, commentator, and an imitator. In the
beginning she "etches an image of being a maverick woman, single-handedly turning her
litigants' flank by the sleight of truculence and intelligence which are both unusual and
impressive" (Pathak 11). The way she baffles everyone with her pranks and mimicry, reveals
her skill to amuse others and rejuvenate herself. She is extremely caustic about others. Her
description of her co-actors is punctuated with shrewdness and sarcasm. "Her reclusive
immiscibility, outsmarting eloquence and the way of repudiating the raperthrusts of her
assailants evinces and establishes her intellectual superiority over others" (Pathak 11). Her
co-actors, unable to treat her disarming frankness in the lighter vein, fume and fret
vehemently and wait to take revenge on her.

A murder may be forgiven, an affront never. The humiliated group of co-actors,
unable to find any other means to defeat her, under the safest mask of a mock trial, gang up,
hunt, haunt, and pounce on their common victim by unfolding all her hitherto concealed facts
leaving little chance of recovery. With throbbing heart and in great ecstasy, they dissect her
by disclosing her delicate position. "Her intractability and determination are suddenly
mollified into docility and courteous subservience to her encroachers, leading her to mutely
accept the invalidity of verdict on her for the perpetration of the unpardonable crime" (Pathak
11). Though her free and copious flow of tears mystify them, "they are bent on grilling her
further, not giving her a moment of respite” (Dharan 36) and achieve significant success in
their blatant and ill-fated attempt.

An unwed woman’s pregnancy in the Indian context, right from the days of legendary
Kunti Devi, is regarded as an immoral act. While grown up unmarried girls are considered
sinful canker on the body of society, unmarried motherhood is believed to “dynamite the
very roots of our tradition, our pride in ourselves, our culture and our religion” (115). From
the moment she realized that a little lisping bud has been growing in her womb, she struggles
to create a clean world for her unborn son but in vain.

When chased by crucial issues from all corners, even the wisest person will feel dizzy and
Benare is no exception. Despite her efforts to remain unperturbed and high spirited, the
innate inherent problem causes great inner turmoil resulting in swift changes of mood that
betray her to her co-actors. Symptoms of a split personality are visible and her expressions
of self-defence through her monologue exemplify that. The afflicted and frenzied mind is
tossed between the roles of a teacher and that of a mother. From being an enthusiastic, a
radiant and vibrant person, she is dragged to the state of a dumbstruck and miserable
“crumpled nothing” (206). Jung’s analysis, “The conscious mind is based upon and results
from an unconscious psyche which is prior to consciousness and continues to function
together with or despite consciousness” (Pathak 13) furnishes a satisfactory answer to the
“apparently weird behavioural diversity in the character of Benare” (Pathak 10).

The other woman character in Silence! is Mrs. Kashikar who is expected to dance in
accordance with the tunes of her husband. Her economic dependence, infertility, and the
social codes impose on her nothing but subservience. Women are not better than
marionettes. “Deprived of the right of autonomy and self-governance, of scopes and
opportunities for development, she came to discover the significance of her life in cultivating
herself, pursuant to the expectations aspirations and decrees of man” (Pathak 15). Mrs.
Kashikar relishes her shadowy existence willingly and caters to the demands of her husband.
Her miserable economic dependence in comparison with Benare’s boundless independence
and free woman status makes her burn with jealousy and she exploits the opportunity to subdue Benare.

Though she grudges now and then over her husband’s biased treatment, Mrs. Kashikar ultimately conducts in concord with his expectation and leads a problem free life. Suffering from a persecution complex on account of her barrenness, she is utterly spiteful of Benare. Tendulkar exposes through her, “a discontented woman’s repressible malevolence against a superior, successful being” (Dharan 54).

Mrs. Kashikar is not endowed with any significant special trait, but is ridiculous and in an insidious way, dangerous. She undergoes public humiliation in the hands of her husband, yet commands the respect and recognition of others due to her marital status. The life of a married woman, in spite of her miserable dependence and domestic slavery, has greater advantages for she is secure while an unwed woman’s life is under constant threat. Despite Benare’s individuality, independence, and intellectual supremacy, the co-actors “irretrievably trap her in her immediate environment” (Chari 36), attack her suddenly like a flash flood in an unguarded moment and cause inconceivable mental agony.

This notion is further exemplified through the next pair Rama - wife of Ramakant and Manik - his sister in The Vultures. This play depicts the goriest of the family relations exposing the existence of “the raw, vulgar and relentless but self-frustrating march of violence” (Chari 67) in Indian society today. The life of Tendulkar’s characters is filled with misery not because of the economic barriers alone, but mainly because of “their inner demons, which they can neither identify nor control” (Rao 71) and this predicament is starkly portrayed in The Vultures. The playwright has succeeded in delineating decadence and dehumanization by projecting the vulturine instincts of human beings in all its brutality. Women naturally become the pitiable victims of the animalistic attack of men.

Rama, Ramakant’s wife, has not been subjected to any brutal physical assault on the stage. She is a typical ideal traditional Hindu wife, very pious, quiet, hard working and docile, resilient, forbearing, adjusting, and never demanding. The playwright’s depiction is,
“She was like a doe. / An innocent doe, untouched. / As loving as the earth. / [...] A tender, tender-hearted / Idol to adore” (203). Even this seemingly desire less woman has been burning with a strong desire that is to mother a child. She is doubtless that her womb is healthy and sound, but the seed is weak, feeble, and lifeless, devoid of virtue and soaked in poison. She mutely regrets that in the living death of her wifehood, she commits ‘sati’ every moment. She eloquently expresses her unending plight in the following words. “Everyday, a new death. Every minute, a thousand, million deaths. A pain like a million needles stuck in your heart. Blinding you, maddening you with pain. You can’t endure them. But you can’t pull them out” (240).

Ramakant, her superstitious husband, with an absolute disregard for her feelings and oblivious of her expectations, takes her to saints seeking their blessings for the fulfilment of their wish. She cries in anguish, “Everyday a new mystic, a swami, an astrologer, a doctor – rubbing your head at the feet of every lump of stone he tells you to. Stretching out a begging hand to them. [...] Quietly enduring whatever sacred ash, ash of incense, talisman, performing whatever useless vows or diets they may give you” (241). She, who knows the bitter truth, unhesitatingly acknowledges that her womb’s raging thirst always meets with a fast of harsh drought. Whenever her husband, with drooling lips makes disgusting drunken love, she finds it very repugnant and nauseating. Rajaninath, the illegitimate son fathers the illegitimate child by impregnating his sister-in-law Rama.

Ramakant, at the revelation of the pregnancy, is in the seventh heaven so long as he is blissfully unaware of the source of the seed. When his wife expresses her dreadful solitariness, in stead of showing solidarity, he discards her fear as a mere fancy of the brain. On a propitious occasion, when the gossamer veil of innocence falls down, what is perceptible is the dark nativity. At the slightest hint of the bitter truth, he raises hell resulting in the abortion. Rama, having experienced a scapegoat’s agony, has become a frozen figure “empty of pain and desires” (206).
Good is not absolute and there is always the co-existence of good and evil. In The Vultures on the other hand, evil is absolute and there is decline in human values and virtues. Rama, despite her stoic endurance and servility has not experienced love, care, warmth, affection, or protection in any of her roles as wife, sister-in-law or daughter-in-law. Though she is compared to an innocent sparrow, her deceitful and treacherous affair with her brother-in-law ultimately foreshadows her damnation.

Manik, the other woman character is an utter contrast to Rama. She has inherited all the vulturine traits of her father and brothers. She is bold, arrogant, immoral, hysterical, cunning, but more diplomatic and shrewder than her brothers. She is as cruel, mean, and selfish as her brothers, but worse than King Lear’s ungrateful daughters and more scheming and wicked than Lady Macbeth. She is a woman of loose morals and her sexual escapades are to hook someone in order to settle in life. The ways of this slothful slut are equally monstrous and her expressions are equally loathsome. She joins hands with her brothers only to transfer the money from her father’s account to that of theirs. Like Mrs. Kashikar, she too does not entertain any fellow feeling with the other woman in the play. Despite her craftiness and thoughtfulness, Manik is miserably victimized because she is a hapless woman. When her leg is mercilessly broken and her foetus is barbarously kicked out, the audience revolt but never sympathize. Her affected body, mind, and soul crave for vengeance which is successfully executed by her. Feelings of love or affection in abundance genuinely shared among siblings are not to be dreamt of in this family. Mutual discord and suspicion reign supreme and the resultant violent assault astound the audience. Manik’s position is more pitiable for she can never rest under the warm protective wings of true love. Neither her father, nor her lover nor even her brothers would ever redeem her from her insecure position and she can never enjoy carte blanche. Driven away from home, yet another destitute is added to the already existing long list and she is reduced to a “restless shivering painted shadow in life” (Eliot The Family Reunion 20). The rebellious Manik, a dame sans merci, is a bold contrast to the servile Rama, a lady noted for her humaneness.
There is also a startling contrast between the two women in the next play, *Sakharam*. Tendulkar has deviated from the “traditional idea of an ideal woman and portrayed them as realistic characters of the contemporary society” (Dass 12). By bringing together the religious minded and inconspicuous Laxmi with her incongruous ways, and the rebellious as well as irreligious full figured frigid Champa with her insolence, in the midst of an extremely rash, choleric and agnostic character Sakharam, Tendulkar has picturized the tangled web of human relationships especially in lower and lower-middle class society and highlighted the hollowness of middle class moralities.

Laxmi is weak, worn-out and shrinking but very pious, conventional, obedient, hard-working, highly imaginative, and a woman of few words. The most striking feature in her character is her intimate friendliness with sub-human creatures like a black ant and a crow. She regards herself virtuous and behaves like a puritan. “The grey in the pure whiteness of Laxmi’s character” (Gokhale 87) is her pious arrogance.

Like a typical ideal wife, Laxmi willingly submits herself to Sakharam’s merciless man-handling and to his cruel demands in bed. Though she surrenders herself allowing Sakharam to exercise his will and manipulative power without any fear of retaliation, she is not completely meek, timid, submissive, and innocent as she poses to be. She has been battered and beaten thoroughly into a docile religious minded woman.

Laxmi’s unflinching faith in God and in her virtuous nature infuses in her tremendous inner strength to endure bravely all hardships. Even when her husband abandoned and hounded her out of home into an unfriendly world, citing her infertility as the cause, she managed to overcome such a miserable victimized state by virtue of her unshakable belief. She declares, “My faith is what gave me strength when life was hard. Another woman would have killed herself. I went on living”(178). She is leech like in her clinging to Sakharam and indestructibility.

This apparently humble, simple, and tremulous woman is indeed endowed with great moral strength. She is the most complex of all the three major dramatic personae in the play.
She creates a wonderful fantasy world where she rejoices in the company of insects and birds. “Seeking escape from the cruel world of man and his domination, which has enjoined on woman faith, devotion and fasting - all feudal virtues” (Chari 31), she makes friends with a black ant. She talks freely, laughs merrily, and her monologue in reaction to the ant’s crawling on her body is filled with erotic overtones which arouses Sakharam’s suspicion and jealousy. She regularly feeds a crow, whose voice, she believes, she can distinguish. It is this humane and childlike innocent response which instantaneously wins the heart of Champa.

Though Laxmi is also only a kept woman, she regards Sakharam her husband, master, and God. She believes herself to be a chaste and an honest woman. She very firmly asserts that Gods listen to her and would do her good. She exercises a purgative influence over Sakharam reforming him from the “renegade he is into a more or less enthusiastic believer in her God and her ways of worship” (Gokhale 88). This most intriguing character’s intense religiosity has its own fanatic reservations regarding worship. She is not a spineless worm as she is taken to be but has the temerity and tenacity to cling to her cherished beliefs. Her firm refusal to admit Dawood to sing the hymn discloses the “worm in Laxmi’s religious package”. She is beaten black and blue but with the characteristic strength of a martyr, she righteously defends her faith. She exerts great spiritual influence on Sakharam and succeeds in making him almost give up drinking and saying his prayers regularly and figure 20 exhibits the transforming Sakharam.

Laxmi is capable of being simultaneously, “naively religious, deeply conscious of her moral superiority and shrewd and calculating in her use of this faith and morality to serve her material ends” (Singh 38). With subtle cleverness, she impresses on Champa to make a re-entry. She tells Champa that she has left her nephew in Amalner as she wanted to keep away from her newly married nephew’s way. When she entreats Sakharam, who is aware of her moral rectitude, infallibility, and spotless honesty, she cites a trumped-up theft charge as the
reason for her expulsion. She tries to impress that her innocence has been wronged thereby making him feel sorry for her and earning his approval to stay at home.

Laxmi’s soliloquy, which discloses the dishonesty of Champa, is viewed by Brijraj Singh thus: “A person who possesses a prurient and fanciful imagination can easily invent the story of Champa’s affair with Dawood and, what is more believe it completely” (37). It is not Champa’s affair but her affair with a Muslim that is indigestible to her. A woman of the traditional mould, though both are destitutes and live with a man other than their husbands, she strongly believes that she is a virtuous wife whereas Champa is a despised temptress. She does not shudder at Champa’s murder nor does she regard Sakharam’s deed a sin or crime. Touching her symbols of strength, which are her mangalsutra and the photograph of her God, she stoutly condemns Champa’s wickedness and “fortifies herself with a litany of her own good deeds against all the evil deeds that Champa has been guilty of” (Gokhale 89). In the game of the survival of the fittest, by divulging Champa’s affair, Laxmi wins over Sakharam binding him inextricably to her.

The deep rooted exploitation of women in society is best exemplified not through the religious Laxmi but through the rebellious Champa. She is lazy, bold, irreligious, unconventional, and contemptuous about the moral codes of society. She has the audacity to abandon her lecherous but impotent husband. Her curvy seductive structure proves fatal. Shinde, a constable, when raided her parents’ house, manipulated his power and made her his wife. Unable to endure the sadistic sexual demands of her impotent husband, she turns a frigid and leaves him.

While Laxmi is a moral force to Sakharam, Champa is a sexual challenge. She is neither sentimental nor sensitive nor imaginative but very practical. Unlike Laxmi for whom Sakharam is God, Champa looks at him as yet another exploiter. She has no qualms in beating her husband. Her ferocity in punishing her former victimizer is presented in figure 21. She shakes even Sakharam with her unconventional ways, foul
language, dictatorial attitude, irreligiosity, and carefree manners. She is a replica of all that Sakharam has claimed to be previously but Sakharam is bowled over and carried away by her luscious structure. Losing his bluster and rhetoric, he performs her commands instead of dictating her.

Champa is not so rude, insensitive, or impertinent intrinsically as she appears to be. “The white in Champa’s grey - black portrait” is (Gokhale 87) the stream of compassion that flows within her. It is well brought out in her readiness to offer Laxmi a shelter and protect her from Sakharam’s brutal beatings. Her sado-masochistic experiences in the hands of her impotent husband leave her a frigid. But the libidinous craving of Sakharam roused by Champa’s luscious structure will not take into account her sexual inhibitions. While the very thought of the act itself is repulsive and dreadful, her instinctive understanding of Sakharatn’s needs prompt her to come to some sort of compromise. Hence, when he atrociously feeds her with liquor she yields in order to cater to his physical needs and remains perpetually drunk and this change in her can be observed through figure 22. Despite her brash replies, gross manners, and domineering nature, Champa never intends to chuck Laxmi out. In the ménage a trios set up, Laxmi’s presence and chanting have a negative impact on Sakharam reducing him to sexual impotence. Disgusted with him, Champa derides and denounces him. Laxmi, being the root cause for this debacle, he kicks her out. The unexpected disclosure of Champa’s disloyalty precipitates the crisis and Sakharam strangles her to death. “Though she looks seductive, she is the one who has suffered most on account of her voluptuous body while the men have sought their selfish pleasures from it” (Gokhale 87).

The plight and struggles of the homeless birds for sustenance have been delineated with impeccable realism in Sakharam. Whether single, married, or destitute, the prevailing condition remains the same for a woman. Even a well educated, well informed and intelligent wife is expected to be an excellent homemaker, remaining subservient and servile,
losing her individual identity in the process of accomplishing a successful home. Kamala seems to insist that news reporters should be torch-bearers and not torturers. Actually, it "serves as an evidence to prove the various ways, women have been shaped, conditioned and marginalized by patriarchy" (Madge 81) and brings out "the characteristic suffering of the Indian middle class women perpetrated by selfish, malicious, secretive and hypocritical male chauvinists" (Dharan 41) within the institution called marriage, considered to be the holiest of the holy in Indian society. Women are still mere slaves to their male owners, though the common nomenclature for them is wives.

Santa, a highly educated and well informed woman, lives in Delhi with her husband Jaisingh Jadav, a dedicated investigative journalist. She is extremely sensitive to her husband’s needs and tastes and attends to his demands with alacrity typical of an ideal wife. The promptness with which she makes a note of the contents of the phone calls, the happiness with which she arranges the home to receive her husband and the care evinced in preparing delicious dishes and curries her husband is very fond of - are all proofs indicating the love, respect, and affinity of Santa to her husband whom she holds in high esteem. She prides in his accomplishments, in his commitment to his profession and to the cause of unveiling the atrocities undergone by the underdogs. She takes immense measures to keep her home free from problems and domestic discord.

Santa has willingly accepted the status of a slavish, docile wife whose orbit of existence is centred on her husband. She is pleased to be a "lovely bonded labourer" and carries out all the presumptuous instructions of her husband. She is quite co-operative in materializing her husband’s efforts, very adaptable to the environment and adept at carrying out his wishes. Since she knows that three keys to more abundant living are caring about others, daring for others, and sharing with others, she intensely strains to establish all the three at the cost of her individual identity.

The purchase of a fellow woman, the tribal Kamala, as a slave from the Luhardaga flesh trade by her husband flabbergasts Santa. This is uneasy to digest but triggers her thought
process. Knowing that values are presumed to a female's responsibility, she has remained submissive and patient subordinating her will and desires to those of her husband unselfishly. Jaisingh's commoditization of Kamala, his insensitivity to her emotions and expectations, his contempt as well as deceptive conversation, his firmness in the successful conduct of the press conference, and his callous disregard for her ragged appearance open her hither to blind folded eyes.

From being a domesticated docile wife, Sarita is trying to sound strong-willed and assertive. When her clear mind is clouded with confusing thoughts, descends down a bolt from the blue in the form of a simple question from the illiterate innocent tribal Kamala. She asks Sarita, "How much did he buy you for?" (34). This casual question of deep significance demands great casualty as it is quite revealing and the debilitated Sarita is seen in figure 23. It dawns on Sarita that she has been treated just like a slave by her husband. Kamala's estimate of Sarita's worthiness as an educated lady but her unworthiness as a barren woman makes her pass a verdict. She pours out:

The master bought you, he bought me, too. So, memsahib, both of us must stay here together like sisters.[... ] I'll do the hard work, and I'll bring forth the children, I'll bring them up. You are an educated woman. You keep the accounts and run the house [...]. Fifteen days of the month, you sleep with the master; the other fifteen, I'll sleep with him. Agreed? (35).

Sarita, who has never analyzed her life from such perspectives is in a whirl but is strongly moved by the same and agrees to abide by Kamala's words.

Kamala's assessment creates a sea change in the attitude of Sarita. She is in a fix and the revelation of her husband's impassivity, coolness, and indifference to the sufferings and feelings of others make her devoid of regard and respect for her lord. Sarita's blissful framing within her familial context crushes and her identification with Kamala makes her have a "conscious fall from wifehood to slave hood" (Jain 100) and she confronts her own
angst. From being diffident, she grows defiant and begins to assert her will. Neither Jaisingh, who had been enjoying unsolicited co-operation from Sarita nor Kakasaheb, who had been marveling at her self-sacrifice, can understand the reason for the change in her behaviour. Her faith in her husband as a slave driver founders when she listens to his drunken revelry after the press conference. Her tolerance and forbearance reach the breaking point when her husband’s insensible pursuit after worldly fame under the masquerade of a committed journalist, has been unfolded. She earnestly perseveres to protect Kamala and demands that she should be allowed to stay in their home and her attempt to redress Kamala’s afflictions is disclosed through figure 24.

Sarita decides not to be a mere pawn anymore in Jaisingh’s game of chess and strives to cease her insignificant existence as a mere object “that provides physical enjoyment, social companionship and domestic comfort” (Banerjee 581) to her husband. All along, she has had an insignificant existence remaining subservient, silent and faithful. Despite her daily humiliations as a woman, she has been expressing her love, respect, and obedience to her husband whereas he has never taken any effort to win her respect, love, and loyalty. Her silent but determined struggle for freedom gains momentum before her husband’s dismissal.

Nora in A Doll’s House finds it impossible and improper to be compromised with her self-centred treacherous husband Torvald Helmer because he has been pretending to be her genuine care taker but in truth is incredibly selfish. Sarita, who is equally afflicted and offended at heart by the selfish hypocrisy of her husband, intends to rebel against her servile condition and establish her significance. Instead of deserting Jaisingh when he is treacherously deprived of his job, she extends the most needed emotional support to him during the greatest crisis. Despite her awareness that the man, whom she has taken to be her partner, is actually the master of a slave, she does not wish to give him another deadliest blow by leaving him.
The beauty of any relationship is love, care and understanding without which life is incomplete. Sympathy with all creatures makes anyone truly human and humane. Love has a chance to blossom when men and women are able to respect and accept their differences. Sarita’s compassion for and comprehension of the plight of Jaisingh endow her with genuine concern and she stands as his great moral support and her sympathetic understanding is revealed in figure 25. At the same time, she has not given up her pursuit for independence. Though “not suddenly exalted, emancipated and liberated, she begins to exercise her will to change” (Jain 100). Despite her intense struggle within and decision to break away from the fettered role, her humaneness induces her to react differently. She declares, “But a day will come, Kakasaheb, when I will stop being a slave. I’ll no longer be an object to be used and thrown away. I’ll do what I wish, and no one will rule over me. That day has to come. And I’ll pay whatever price I have to pay for it” (52). This quiet determination in her words throws valuable light on her recalcitrance. Her sagacity of mind fascinates and impresses not only Kakasaheb but also the viewers.

The purpose of Kamala, a scared, but eloquent illiterate tribal woman in the play, is to be not merely an incontrovertible proof to establish the existence of flesh trade in the modern democratic India, but also to bring out clearly that underneath the surface differences of class, there is a very thin line of demarcation in the status of women and their respective positions in society. Kamala’s role is that of a signifier of exploitation. She is “the catalyst who brings Sarita, the educated, intelligent wife of Jaisingh to her existential crisis and precipitates the fall of Jaisingh” (Jain 93). Kamala’s existence reveals the “reductionist rubric of exchange - values in the decadent feudal relations” (Chari 67). Sunil Chenbag states, “‘Kamala’ after a time in the play becomes a symbol. The wife of the journalist becomes ‘Kamala’ and ultimately even he (the journalist) becomes Kamala” (Chari 68). Tendulkar, who has made it clear that his attempt is to delve deep into different characters and to know how life functions at different levels, has dealt with the intrinsic calamity in and
perturbation of a woman and delineated it realistically without any ostentation. He has also debunked the myth that only the family can provide comfort and security. Jyoti, in *Kanyadaan*, once again asserts that service, sacrifice, submissiveness, and tolerance are the most required traits for a woman especially when she becomes a wife. Despite her desolated and isolated state, this wise woman proves that happiness is a question of determination.

All the four members of Jyoti’s families are “votaries of socialism dedicated to the cause of the upliftment of the untouchables” (Rao 651). Born to and brought up by the progressive minded socialist parents and in a domestic environment of great ‘spirit de corps’, Jyoti is much influenced and carried away by her father’s ideals and principles. Her refined thoughts, civilized and cultured manners, positive outlook towards life and people, and above all her intense eagerness to practise her father’s principles in life trigger her to take the unwise decision of marrying Arun Atravale, a dalit youth. *Kanyadaan*, like *Kamala*, is an indictment of “the success oriented male dominated society where women are often victims or stepping stones in man’s achievements” (Banerjee 583) and in Jyoti’s case both.

Jyoti is a combination of grace, charm, virtue, courage, love, and sacrifice. The qualities that she lacks are prudence and worldly wisdom. Her very short acquaintance with Arun in the socialist camp makes her understand that as a human being he has potential, intelligence, drive, and creativity. When he challenges her with an offer of her marriage with him, without any forethought or reluctance, she consents to the offer. Her parents have been championing the cause of eradication of castes and her move, she believes, will contribute to the establishment of a casteless society.

Jyoti brings home Arun with great hope and expectations. His pungent and eloquent lecture as a reply to Seva’s query regarding his future plan unveils the malicious, vicious, and sadistic nature of Arun much to the terror and shudder of the refined liberals. Seva, Jyoti’s mother, rightly warns regarding the incompatible and irreconcilable class differences. Jyoti, who is ignorant about Arun’s vileness, begins to discover his innate feeling of injustice, frustration, and inner desire for revenge, but feels that his complexity might have been
generated by his circumstances. Her faith is that once she perceives and comprehends the complexity, she can dispel it. With immense hope she willingly gets herself entangled into the irrational knot that inextricably binds Arun, the unrefined gold with rough edges and Jyoti a woman of firm determination with an exceptional spirit of endurance.

During the very first appearance itself, Arun has made his peculiarities clearly visible. Jyoti, a self-controlled, strong-willed, self-reliant, and rational woman with immense faith in her inner strength, resolves to venture her life in order to bring a meaningful change in the life of a dalit. It can be presumed that “the brahmin girl will endure a hopeless marriage in which she is compelled to coexist with a bestial man who regales in the triumph of his conquest of an upper - caste girl and brutally tyrannizes her” (Rao 652). Jyoti likes to be a catalyst implementing desired effect on Arun but as her mother has rightly predicted, she has allowed a wrong move to spoil her life. Her discovery of Arun’s incorrigible nature changes her into a stoic and withdrawn woman and refuses to disclose or discuss anything with her parents. Her resolve to remain alone crumbles as her father can not digest the failure of the precious experiment.

Jyoti’s woeful miseries make her lose her morale and she is torn in conflict between her desire to free herself at one side and her awareness of her duties and responsibilities as a wife and her unshakable faith in the ideals and ethical codes of her father on the other side. As she has been nurtured never to wriggle out of her responsibility, she succumbs to her existential crisis. The tenacious and assertive self is gradually reduced to a pawn. As days pass by, Arun becomes more thick-skinned and refuses to recognize the selfless service rendered and sacrifice made by Jyoti. He unleashes both physical and verbal violence on her without the least botheration. In his drunken laziness, he sponges on his wife living shamelessly like a parasite. His malicious happiness does not get gratified by subjecting his wife to brutal and violent beatings and kicking. He torments her with a perverted delight by calling her mother a procuress and her father, her role model, a eunuch. She can perceive that unless the inner self aspires, nothing can promote a man into a noble being. Amidst the
bludgeoning of fate, in spite of the challenges, hostilities, and vehement kicks, Jyoti remains uncrushed because Arun, her better half is, though the bitter half, not a fraudster.

Arun, the fountain head of all actions, under the garb of an invitation actually humiliates and subdues his father-in-law “by intimidating him into paying a public homage” (Rao 652). Nath is not blind to the atrocious outbursts of Arun. Nath has always believed that the strength of his convictions can shatter rocks to fragments, but his latest discovery of Arun’s true nature as a hypocrite and avenger induces him to revise his convictions regarding people. To prevent greater and inconceivable torments to his dearest daughter, he delivers a deceitful address appreciating the meritorious contribution of Arun. He convinces himself that his blatant lying might make Jyoti’s life a little more tolerable. Jyoti is “no trembler in the world’s storm-troubled sphere” (Bronte 114). Her head, even while bleeding, remains unbowed because she has taken her father’s words for gospel truth, adopted her father’s values and been guided by his liberalism and humanism.

With undaunted spirit and unshakable faith, Jyoti has marched ahead to uproot, destroy, and transform Arun’s propensities towards evil in order to convert her life a happy, peaceful and heavenly one. Nath’s speech, which has been made not to sing the glory of Arun’s artistic creativity but to dole out charity for her, has clearly revealed that he too camouflages and his high sounding principles are all false, vicious claptrap. She has learnt from the strength of her own experience that the ideals she has imbibed are in truth poisonous drugs that have numbed her consciousness. While she is in a mad pursuit trying to segregate the inextricable beast from the creative poet in Arun, her irreproachable father’s hypocrisy and sanctimoniousness distress her deeply. She grows stoic and self-righteous. In firm resolution, she makes an irrevocable decision resulting in the irretrievable breakdown of her relationship with her parents and brother. Her clear perception are effectively expressed when she pronounces in rationalized sensation, “I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar now, I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I don’t say harijan. I despise the term. I am an untouchable, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don’t touch me. Fly from my shadow,
otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values" (566). Her ideal father's change of colour is indigestible and irreconcilable. She is hopeless and disheartened. Female desire, even if it is unselfish, results in disappointment and disillusionment. This feature of life is poignantly and successfully delineated by projecting the problems and plights, yearnings and aspirations and failures and foibles of Jyoti - a bold, determined, and an action-oriented woman.

Seva, unlike Jyoti and Nath, is prudent, judicious, and far-sighted. Though she sounds a little harsh, her genuine concern for the well being of her daughter and sincere anxiety to get and give her the best can be at once grasped by the audience. Despite her earnestness to make it dawn on Jyoti that if her wish fulfils, it would result in an inharmonious and uncongenial domestic environment, Jyoti’s firmness to marry Arun succeeds. Arun rubs Seva up the wrong way with his blatant expression in their very first meeting itself. Though it is undoubtedly a rout to Seva, she has been extending her support to Jyoti after her marriage with Arun. With the characteristic boldness of a socialist and the uncontrollable anger of an offended mother, she directly condemns Arun for his barbaric assault of their daughter. The inexplicable pain felt by the mother especially when her expectant child is mercilessly kicked in the belly, her helplessness in redeeming her daughter from miseries, her impotent fury at the detached attitude of her daughter, and above all her burning sense of shame at the fierce and public denunciation of Arun are brilliantly and poignantly portrayed. The drastic decline in their position from being the promoters of the world to the puppets dancing to Arun’s dictates is best brought out when she compels her husband to preside over the function because that is their only option. Seva is indeed a rare mixture of both a trenchant critic and a sensitive human, who has the audacity to call a spade a spade and refinement to extend her helping hand to wipe away the woeful tears of aching hearts.

Tendulkar’s creative genius proves its mettle not in the depiction of common people like Jaisingh Jadav or Arun Athavale but in the deduction and deliberate delineation of uncommon individuals like Sakharam, a libertine, or Ghashiram, a tyrant. Among his female
characters also, though his portrayal of traditional models like Rama and Laxmi earns the sympathy of his viewers, it is his projection of the peculiar personalities like Champa, the femme fatale and Manik, the drunken slut and monstrous schemer that both captivates and castigates the minds of the members on and off the stage. Yet another significant addition in Tendulkar's fascinating variety is Sumitra Dev, a lesbian in A Friend's Story.

Most of Tendulkar's characters are not entirely and exclusively his own brain children but at the disclosure of the striking features of certain real livings beings, they are being carefully carved with great creative imagination after immense speculation. Tendulkar's memory, pertaining to his introduction to the real Sumitra Dev, is still green. He first saw her enacting a masculine role in an all women cast play. She was upright, aggressive, plain speaking, and manly with a gruff and throaty voice. Her unmistakably masculine gait and manner were highly convincing and awe-inspiring. Mitra's bold performance and perfect manners made a deep impact on his juvenile mind. Many years after that incident, he heard some more information about her which was bizarre and abhorrent. The revelation of her craving for a girl and the resultant major crisis both bewildered and perturbed him greatly. The deep rooted image engrained in his young mind resulted in the creation of the play. Tendulkar admits, "Out of some compulsion which had no logic, it grew in spite of the near possibility of a play on a lesbian being staged. [...] The play got written in spite of me" (Tendulkar xvi). From the bare details gathered and the little first hand information obtained, the undying creative urge in Tendulkar invents subtle details and amalgamates them to create a unique person with inimitable traits for the amazement of the audience.

Sumitra Dev is intrepid, adventurous, cheeky, and immodest. As this play is centred on Mitra's plight as a trans-sexual personality and her friendship with Bapu alias Shrikant Marathe, the contradiction in her personality and the complexity in her life are presented through Bapu's version. The masculine vigour in her stride and speech is the most striking feature that immediately captivates anyone. She is carefree and laughs in loud bursts. Her eyes meet anyone in straight combat. Her broad forehead suggests intelligence. Her entire
personality is suffusing with a natural, aggressive masculinity which is irresistibly attractive to men. In order to discover her true nature, she boldly experiments once with her servant and discovers that she can never become a man’s partner. Not knowing how to overcome her predicament, she attempts suicide by consuming sleeping tablets but in vain.

The discovery of her defect does not make her squeamish. It is her burning desire and unhealthy but irresistible fascination for Nama, a fellow girl student that proves to be fatal. She hood winks, threatens, pleads, and adopts any means to enjoy Nama’s company. She unabashedly admits, “I love her with my whole being Bapu. I’ve lost my heart to her. [...] I’ll not let her off. I won’t rest till I get her” (448). The undying urge to fulfil her need induces her to blacken Bapu’s name through anonymous letters imitating his handwriting. In her firm resolution to have Nama for herself and to deprive Dalvi that privilege, she is a picture of confidence and alert like a wild animal. She treats with flagrant disregard any one who comes on her way. When humiliated by Dalvi, she becomes more savage. In a fit of uncontrollable rage and terrible fury, she devices plans which drags and disturbs the innocent Bapu. Despite Bapu’s pleadings to rectify her ways, she remains adamant and grows more vehement in her pursuit for Nama. If Nama tosses between Mitra and Dalvi, she grows more violent.

When Nama is separated from both Mitra and Dalvi and sent to Calcutta, Mitra too flies in search of Nama’s foot prints. Even after being ditched by Nama, though she is disillusioned, she does not feel desolated or abandoned because of her awareness that, “as love crowns you, so shall he crucify you” (Gibran 13). Most of her pains are self-chosen, and she hides her worries behind an air of insouciance. Despite her miserable defeat in tracing the whereabouts of Nama, she brings Bapu a tin of Rasagoolas. Bapu, though baffled at this unexpected gesture, has firmly denied any more association with her in the name of friendship. This is the cruelest punishment and severest blow that slain the stoic woman.

Mitra, throughout the play, remains firm, earnest, steadfast, courageous, and unyielding. She is prudent and clever. She is a good critic but is unconcerned about the pain her remarks
would cause on others. She is very sharp and a good judge of characters. From the day she comes into contact with Bapu, she discovers his trustworthiness, helping tendency, and good nature. She has the gumption to untie even the Gordian knot with the help and co-operation of Bapu. She has taken the weakling Bapu as her sole companion and confides everything about her in him. Her perplexity regarding herself, her miserable deduction of her true nature, her bafflement at the discovery, her attempt to commit suicide, her amazing resilience, her insatiable desire to have Nama, her illicit means, her exploitation of Nama, her unsympathetic attitude and her merciless biting criticism – all her merits and weaknesses, her expectations and frustrations and hopes and disappointments are unreservedly shared only with Bapu, because not even Nama but only Bapu can see through her problems and accept her as she is. His fidelity wins her confidence hands down and she pours out everything to him. Bapu is more than a friend or mother to Mitra. His desertion causes inexplicable sufferings for her and she is reduced to a whore and drunkard. Her proclamation regarding her independence is only a blatant lie. That, Bapu has been her great moral support, is brought to the limelight, when she cries in agony, “Friendship is over. Nama is over. No dependence. [. . .] Bapu gone. Bapu is dead - dead – dead. [. . .] I killed him” (492-93). She, unable to bear her steep decline, chooses to end her life and succeeds in her final attempt. “In her vertiginous descent, the play reminds its audience that there is no place for Mitras in a violently homophobic world” (Aldama 90). Mitra’s tragic end indicates that the world is unwilling to accommodate and shelter human life in all its diversity and complexity.

Nama, the only other female figure, is neither assertive nor authoritative but highly vulnerable allowing herself to be easily swayed away by others. Her lack of confidence, assessment, and firmness lead to tragic consequences. It is not Bapu but Nama, who is a spineless worm, for she permits both Mitra and Dalvi to manipulate her. Due to her indecisiveness, she causes greatest inconvenience to both her lovers. Her efforts to wriggle from the strong hold of the male and female forces are ineffective since she is charmed and carried away by her contacts with both. Things go beyond her power of endurance when
Mitra’s powerful and dominant will begins to exercise its complete authority over her ignoring the very existence of Nama’s self. Nama makes matters more intricate by divulging to Bapu the secret efforts of her parents to free her from the fettered tight corner. The dilemma between her strong affection and intense aversion for Mitra, at one point of time is regulated and she is safely landed. Life becomes highly problematic only to Mitra and she sorts out the complexities by ending her life.

The timely intrusion and remedial measures of Nama’s parents rescue her from perishing. While the parental power becomes the protective power in Nama’s case, it proves to be the fatal power resulting in the destruction of Lalitha Gauri in Ghashiram. This young, slender and stunning beauty is looked upon as the most precious possession by Ghashiram to be bartered to gain power and prominence. Ghashiram’s ascension to Kotwalship, his inhuman exercise of the power, his descend, and eventual victimization are materialized because of his role as Gauri’s father. “All the action impinges on Gauri’s sexuality, her desirableness and objectification” (Multani 113) but quite contradictory to her inevitable centrality to the core and form of the play, but for the two sentences uttered by her, she is marginalized and completely silenced. Her individual will, likes or dislikes seem not even to exist. She has to live in acquiescence to her father’s command and figure 26 explicitly reveals that like a lifeless doll, she is merely expected to accept the treatment of its owner. Everything about Gauri, her captivating personality, liaison with Nana, influence on Nana, pathetic end and abrupt removal from the scene - all her experiences are not depicted or exposed from her own direct purview but from that of her father. Her life determines her father’s powerful position and her death forebodes his brutal end. In addition to Gauri, Gulabi - the courtesan, Chandra - the mid wife, and a brahmin woman pleading for justice are provided with voices only to expose their helpless position. So long as they live in consensus with the existing norms, their lives are problem free and their slightest deviation earns them cruelest punishment.
Women in *Ghashiram* are the inescapable marionettes compelled and confined to dance within the restrained realm to the twists and pulls of their male puppeteers. Such being the miserable state of women ruled by patriarchal power, a striking contrast is effectively established by swearing in a woman, Vijaya, with a breathtaking virtuosity as a ruler in *Encounter*.

"Human existence, the deep understanding of human psychology and expressing them through drama is an obsession" (Barve 22) with Tendulkar. His chief targets are the human mind, and the complexities there in and in *Encounter*, he examines them in a political backdrop. Vijaya, the Princess of Umbugland, an island, is a self-willed, garrulous, mischievous, little-childish, half-witted, playful and an obstinate girl who is completely ignorant of the political intricacies. After the unforeseen demise of her shrewd and diplomatic father, the ministers unwittingly place her on the throne intending to use her as a mere rubber stamp. These self-centred, power-hungry, corrupt, and ambitious criminal leaders in fact put a wrong foot by choosing her their ruler.

King Vichitravirya, her own father, has no time or mind to be with his only daughter and consequently his inability to trace her true worthiness makes him treat her as a half-witted girl. Her questioning attitude, stubborn nature, and firm refusal to blindly adhere to the established norms, reveal her resourcefulness. Through various incidents, Tendulkar unfolds her traits which culminate in her evolution and blossoming as an astute statesman, an able administrator, a seasoned politician and a diplomatic dictator. Amidst the selfish ministers, who thrive on the politics of convenience, she strives in earnestness for the development of her country, establishment of democratic values and to achieve constitutional integrity with the timely help, prompt guidance, and apt suggestions offered by her friend, play mate, and mentor Prannarayan, her eunuch attendant.

Vijaya's authoritarian tendency sprouts in the form of her assertion to cut the legs of the throne short to befit her. The Ministers, despite their annoyance and frustration at her pig-headedness, brush it aside as girlish obstinacy. Under the tutelage of Prannarayan, she
grows diplomatic in her dealings with the ministers and her metamorphosis begins to shape up. The first bitter taste of her evolving diplomacy is experienced by them when she insists on the observance of the protocol of curtsying to her, their queen. Her flat refusal to listen to them ultimately forces them to turn to their old obsequious ways. Like her father, she too exasperates them by making them cool their heels at her office. Despite their earnest efforts to develop intimacy with her and cajole her with affectionate endearments persuading her to sign the royal decrees, she remains indifferent and the ministers cannot account it as youthful inexperience or as a barefaced, laughable childish stunt.

"To hiss when you’re stung is one kind of behaviour. To bluster when you’re stung is politician’s behaviour" (306). Prannarayan’s such maxims have their intended effect on Vijaya and she aspires to rule in earnest. Her unwillingness to confine prudently to the framework of the ministers and her attempts to bring them under her thumb irritate them thoroughly. In deep anguish and helplessness they deprecate her waiting for an opportunity to revolt against openly. Queen Vijaya’s visit to the Kadamba tribe, the original tribe of her island, brings in perceivable changes in Vijaya. Their poverty stricken life offends her deeply but their stoic endurance, firm resistance for enslavement and generosity arrest her heart and she sincerely strives for their upliftment and rehabilitation. Her determination to achieve, maturity to redress the afflictions of her subjects and political ambition are highlighted when she declares, “I will get the credit for achieving what has never been achieved before. This plan will make everyone understand that I am not just my father’s daughter, nor a puppet ruler” (317).

The ministers take this opportunity to bait and depose the queen. They denounce the tribal people as “unprincipled, defective, spineless, vapid, stupid and baseborn faces” (334) and above all as traitors. Her entreaties, endearment, and pleadings fall on their deaf ears. Their non-co operation results in her dictating and implementing a direct royal decree. The infuriated and insulted cabinet intends to give a blistering idea of its might and to chain her disloyal endeavours. Unable to bear her insolence which regarded them as a puppet cabinet,
they propose to put a firm and decisive noose around their opponent’s neck by letting loose upon her the tidal wave of an infuriated mob.

The change in Vijaya from being a haughty and immature girl to a cool, balanced, astute, and diplomatic politician is finely projected in the last act of the play. Her wisdom, extraordinary mental prowess, sharp intellect, fearlessness, and resolve to achieve the desired end are beautifully brought out, when the ministers are awe struck by her sending Bhagadanta in the midst of the infuriated mob that besieged the palace. The piece de resistance of the entire episode is the bold venture of Vijaya into the violent mob and her tactful handling of it which ultimately demands the rude punishment of the cabinet. This unexpected disastrous turn deals the coup de grace to their political career and they surrender to the mercy of the Queen. “Vijaya’s absolute suzerainty over the council and the masses” (Mardhekar 110) proclaims her establishment as the unquestionable queen of Umbugland.

Tendulkar’s basic curiosity about people and life, his skill to internalize details of human behaviour at different levels and in different circumstances and his ability to have a good pick up of mannerisms of speech have significantly contributed for the evolution of innumerable and inimitable characters with their own individual and distinct features. His women are both protagonists and victims located mostly “at the acquiescent receiving end” yet some of them as “aggressive-transgressor of the sexual mores” (Bandhyopadhyay xlv) challenge the power executors while others confirm to their destined traditional roles. The most appreciable element in them is the retaining of their individuality in spite of the oppression and suppression. They struggle hard, fight against the inhuman injustice, and even lose in their battle, but remain distinct by virtue of their special traits.

Tendulkar has brought out both the woes, struggles, and shortcomings and the accomplishments and constant endeavours of women. While the plights of an unwed mother are realistically depicted through Benare, a woman of the same mould Manik has different problems to encounter and solve. Despite her miserable state, Benare never ceases to be human and humane. She has the heart to appreciate Samant’s innocence and Mrs. Kashikar’s
marital bliss, but Manik is inhuman and cruel through and through. Among the three married
women, Sarita stands on a safe platform whereas the struggles of Jyoti and Rama seem to be
everlasting. It is only the struggle for survival that has seemed to develop negative traits in
Laxmi and Champa. Mitra's fixity of purpose brings her within inhuman frame but her other
side is revealed in the Rasagoolas she bought for Bapu and in her suicide. Queen Vijaya's
discussions with Prannarayan throw light on her generous impulse to redress the afflictions
of the neglected mass.

Benare's songs simultaneously reveal her robust spirit and internal conflict. Jyoti's
logical heated argument with her father projects her reasoning ability and firm determination.
Sarita's discussion with Kakasahab brings out her disillusionment and decisiveness. Laxmi's
ties with ants and crows speak of her romantic imagination and her surrender to God sketches
her unflinching faith in her virtuous nature. Champa's merciless beatings of her husband
makes one mistake her to be a ruffian while her protective hand sheltering Laxmi speaks of
her humanitarian concern. Rama's piousness and prayer proclaim her retention of religiosity
in an irreligious environment and her offerings to Rajaninath reveal her genuine concern for
the sufferers. Manik's drinking and smoking exposes her unsecured state and Gauri's mute
submission depicts the depressed and helpless state of women. Mitra's fascination for Nama
demeans her image in the eyes of others but her precious as well as fatal friendship for Bapu
earns the sympathy of others. Vijaya's longing for freedom and refusal to remain a
"diplomatic convention" kindle her to aspire for the upliftment of the underprivileged and her
successful establishment as a canny politician proves her mettle as an able administrator
straightening the curves.

Tendulkar's women impress the reader-audience not only because of their unique
traits and features but because they (except Manik) have groomed and retained their
compassion and humaneness in spite of their deep internalization of patriarchal standards and
the inconsiderate and inhuman treatment experienced in the hands of their male counter parts.
This exploiter - exploited syndrome is made clearly visible and easily perceptible due to the
presence of the supporting characters whose role in effecting the desired result is noteworthy. Relationships in Tendulkar’s plays are examined in “the context of a changing social, political, economic and cultural milieu and in the asymmetrical unequal relations between women and men” (Jain 96). It is through the exposition of these supporting characters that Tendulkar has disclosed the complexities and the denial for women to assert their independence even if they are perfectly capable and intelligent and has also projected “the indomitability and grit of the human spirit” (Gokhale 80).

“The urge to create” acknowledges Tendulkar, “is born out of involvement with life. Creation is the result of grief over something, anger at something, joy about something in life” (Gokhale 79). His grief, joy, and anger are communicated through sarcasm, irony, and direct depiction with the support of the supporting characters. While some of them are individuals teeming with personalities of their own, some others are choric in function and some play the role of chorus. The playwright portrays through such various roles how the battle of survival forces man to go against his traits and characteristics.

In Silence!, the typical back-biting attitude of the self-righteous Indian male has been forcefully portrayed. Tendulkar has purposely chosen his players from various professions so as to lay bare the hypocrisy, lack of sincerity, promiscuity, dishonesty, and a host of other ills that prevail in every vocation. These characters’ dialogues, gestures, and mannerisms reflect “their petty, circumscribed existences fraught with frustrations and repressed desires that find expression in their malicious and spiteful attitudes towards their fellow beings” (Banerjee 571).

The apparent differences are summarily forgotten and these persons put their hands in glove to persecute Benare mercilessly subjecting her to a fierce psychological violence. Tendulkar’s probing into their psyche deducts their latent sadism and the hidden sense of failure pervading their lives - “the inefficiency of Sukhatme as a lawyer, the childlessness of Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar, the non-fulfilment of Ponkshe’s dreams to become a scientist, the vain attempts of Karnik to be a successful actor and the inability of Rokde to attain an
independent, adult existence” (Banerjee 572). Samant, the innocent and simple-hearted villager is introduced to “offset the complexities of the urbane characters” (Banerjee 572).

Tendulkar frowns at those in the society who pose as the custodians of social and moral codes but in reality have their own false value system. He is sarcastic about the teaching community, legal profession, intellectuals, scientists, and modern theatre. People belonging to such fields are entrusted with the special task of rectifying the follies of others, rendering justice to the wronged persons, of developing and improving the lives, strengthening the bonds and teaching the essentials of life. Under the semblance of edutainment, these personalities, in their efforts to kill their time, actually crucify mercilessly a fellow woman just because of their annoyance over her assertiveness, high handedness, and superior calibre.

Through Mrs. Kashikar, the playwright points out how women are urged for their survival to absorb, observe, and propagate patriarchal culture. The perverse nature, heartlessness, and the sadistic temperament of people are disclosed by the way they have trapped a fellow being, hurt her sentiments by probing into her personal problems, and the total objectivity with which they have watched the bleeding heart and the agonized mind, and worst of all the perverse delight enjoyed at her discomfiture. They justify their conduct by calling it a mere game and remain unperturbed about their searing attack and the severe pain. While their farcical moral code generously ignores the extra marital sexual pleasure sought by men, it restricts women’s “sexuality to motherhood within the marriage” (Babu 32). Through this play, the playwright has recorded his strong condemnation for the unjust patriarchal values by exposing a crucial social problem for which he has no legal remedies to offer.

Benare is neither virtuous nor vicious but her opponents pretend to be virtuous whereas in actuality prove to be more vicious and bestial whose efficient exploitation of words beat upon her. The ineffective endeavours of a wronged individual victimized by circumstances against a gang bent on petrifying her are well established in Silence!. While an unwed woman’s pregnancy is severely condemned and mercilessly punished, the very existence of a lesbian is not only being commented upon but strongly objected in A Friend’s Story by the
patriarchal set up. Mitra in A Friend's Story is a powerful person with natural in-built adamancy to achieve her desires. Her captivating personality, stunning characteristic features, and their impact on others are let known through Pande's expressions. Pande, Bapu's room mate, mostly discloses various facts regarding Mitra. The other male character Dalvi, Nama's lover is outrageous and attempts to possess Nama completely as his own. Mitra's tireless and incessant efforts are highly trying his patience and he ravages with mad fury to close all the avenues for Mitra even after Nama is removed from the scene. Just like Mitra, he is also highly self-centred but his masculine temperament drives him to hunt out Mitra and he ceases his cruel pursuit only at her death. Dalvi's character serves to highlight the innumerable obstacles placed on the way of women and to spoil their reputation so as to make survival impossible for them.

It is not only the position of unwed women that is precarious but those of married women too because in the patriarchal set up, marriage is also a "means of upholding male dominance" (Madge 82). A woman who does not conceive is an aberration even if it is not her fault. In Tendulkar's plays, except Seva and Jyoti, all the other married women are childless. The unmarried women - be it Benare, Gauri or Manik - meet their downfall when their illicit affair is brought to light. Except Seva, Jyoti, and Mrs. Kashikar, the married women indulge in extra-marital affairs and justify themselves. In this world of decadence and degeneration, even a timid, submissive, and pious woman like Rama in The Vultures has to wilfully involve in an adulterous activity to attain motherhood. Infertility denies Laxmi wifehood, emboldens Kamala to ask for her share with Sarita, and forces Mrs. Kashikar to accept subjugation and humiliation. This is but one of the various issues that surround and threaten women their stable position.

Since a crucial social issue is being analyzed in the context of an individual versus society, Tendulkar has introduced a miniature of society in Silence!. Even in Kamala, Tendulkar has dealt with the power of mass media a social institute but through which he has exemplified the powerless state of individuals. The maturity that his craftsmanship has
attained is best illustrated in Kamala in which with minimum figures he has achieved maximum success. In addition to the “sexual-social-cultural power dynamics”, he touches upon “the degeneration in the media especially the completely debauched face of the print media” (Jain 105). Kakasaheb, Sarita’s uncle, a journalist himself from the village, frankly states that in the name of high speed investigative sensational journalism, men are becoming insensitive to the pains and plights of people. His arguments with Jaisingh before and after the Press conference clearly highlight the selfish motives of journalists, and their proprietors - the promotion for the former and the increase in the circulation for the latter.

Kakasaheb, Sarita’s uncle is a humanitarian guided by the principles of Mahatma Gandhi. His concerns over Sarita’s helpless state, Jaisingh’s unsafe position, and anonymous phone calls are quite genuine. He is very sensitive and strives sincerely to redress the wronged. Comprehending Sarita’s anxiety and anguish, he earnestly attempts to assuage her offended feelings. He is their eye-opener who helps both Jaisingh and Sarita to realize the actual need of the hour.

Jain, the other man, is also a journalist and a friend of Jaisingh. The shabby and gross treatment meted out to Kamala does not affect him in the least and he laughs at her along with others. Like his other colleagues he too is “a good for nothing gossip monger towards the exploitation of women in particular and human misery in general” (Jain 106). Their disastrous non-seriousness towards work, conviction, and commitment is highly distressing. He is also instrumental in identifying the domineering nature of Jaisingh. Kamalabai, the servant maid, is yet another voiceless creature who expresses her bafflement, awe, and confusion at the revelation of the slave trade. Tendulkar, with a remarkable economy of characters and incidents, has created a “heterogeneous, polyphonic microcosm of urban existence” (Jain 107) where women are imprisoned in the dark cells of familial, cultural, and spatial contexts. Sonali Jain appreciates this play as a “sensitively complex existential document of every day lives” (107).
Sarita’s awareness regarding her insignificant existence does not precipitate her to take up the cudgel and fight for her right. Jyoti of Kanyadaan is a woman of daring action and her self-reliance forces her to fight her battle alone. This play demonstrates how the ideal people, devoid of realistic vision fail to achieve their cherished aim and create new problems. Jayaprakash, the other individual in the play makes it dawn on his ideal father, that yesterday’s victim is today’s victimizer. Jyoti’s mindless act forces not only her but also her brother to surrender to the situation and he watches her suffering with utter helplessness. Having cherished and nourished his father’s ideals right from childhood, he cannot help but remain a mere observer of the atrocities.

In Sakharam, Tendulkar has brought out the fanatic disregard for people of other religion through Laxmi’s strict adherence to her long cherished concepts. Dawood Mian, the only pal of Sakharam is a Muslim by birth and it is this element which stands on the way of the religious minded Laxmi prompting her to divulge Champa’s secret afternoon sessions with him to Sakharam. While Dawood’s presence during Laxmi’s tenure created a spiritual crisis in Sakharam’s life, during Champa’s tenure it results in the loss of peace and freedom.

This play exemplifies “how the domestic violence causes self-alienation in people and produces perverted personality in them” (Babu 18). Fauzdar Shinde, husband of Champa is a sado-masochist. His presence and demand to be beaten up by Champa indicate his deep psychological need to be loved and cared. Though impotent, he tortures Champa with his sadistic ways. His pitiable appearance and Champa’s merciless thrashings deeply affect the sensitive Laxmi and she identifies in him a companion in distress. Her sympathy for this spineless man and her intolerance about his humiliations in the hands of his own wife induce her to betray Champa to Sakharam. Champa’s untimely brutal end is due to Laxmi’s biased notions regarding Dawood Mian as a Muslim and Shinde as a miserable husband. The characters may be a “microscopic minority” but throw light on the dark areas of society that demand objective understanding and a viable solution.
The audience, at a loss for words at the naked display of the self-minted morality of a section of the society, becomes dazed. The naturalistic display of cupidity, sex, and violence showing how the capitalistic values destroy human love and relations in The Vultures leave them dazed and shocked. The greed for money makes one's own kith and kin cruel, crafty, unscrupulous, inhuman, and loveless. In this tale about the vultures, but for the different names and distinct mannerisms, all the characters have inherited the vulturine traits. Since all pursue after money and comfort, they grab, assault, and kill each other. They get as much intoxicated through resorting to violence as through drinking liquor.

In the loveless and joyless situation, each tries to deceive the other to attain the maximum benefit. Hari Pitale, the father, and Umakant, the son, are exact replicas of Ramakant and Manik. All are equally vicious. They lead a life of not eager industry but eager robbery and give themselves to evil courses and ultimately no fortune but ignominy and shame fall on them. Quite contrary to the description of a youth in “Ruth” as “the panther in the wilderness was not so fair as he” (Wordsworth 30), these figures are loathsome, vulgar, and uncouth in appearance and manners. Hari Pitale is a traitor and Umakant’s homo sexual affairs and effeminacy are hinted at. Murder, adultery, deceit and treachery are their means of sustenance. This play exposes that even the family set up is devoid of conventional sentimentalities and “eddies in a destructive vortex of greed and treachery” (Nabar 19). The members of Pitale’s family are all incarnations of anger, greed, fright, pride, hate, and jealousy which incapacitate them from any significant achievement.

The two lambs misplaced amidst the vultures are Rama and Rajaninath. Rajani with his choric function and poetic expression paints the ruthless nature of the vultures in pastel shades. The miserable existence of Rama and his restlessness, embarrassment, helplessness and servitude are mostly reported through his comments in the form of soliloquies. “The macabre portrayal of man’s avarice, cruelty and viciousness reflected in Pappa, Ramakant, Umakant and Manik is a foil to humane and gentle Rama and Rajaninath” (Dani 115). The playwright efficaciously sets the “tender, sensitive albeit indiscreet relations” between Rama
and Rajani against the "absurd relationship of vulturish characters" (Dani 116). Having descended from such a sinful seed, Rajainath realizes that there is no escape for him but tries to redeem at least Rama from damnation and he has gratified Rama's long unfulfilled wish out of genuine concern for her and not with any deceitful design or vengeful desire. Rajani in his role as the chorus "perorates the perpetual torture and compunction for the ferocious, ruthless, drunken, greedy and cunning members of the Pitale family" (Dani 116). The horrid chain of violence and the heinous and monstrous characters disgust and horrify the audience. Since each digs the other's grave, they are to be completely doomed but Rajani prays for mercy.

Through the remaining two political plays, namely Encounter and Ghashiram, Tendulkar has manifested the manipulation of ignorant masses by demagogues. In Encounter, the emergence of Vijaya as the most empowered woman eventually circumventing patriarchy to a great extent is thrillingly projected with the necessary but unexpected twists. In order to highlight her meritorious achievement, Tendulkar has prudently employed Prannarayan, her eunuch attendant, King Vichitravirya her father, five experienced statesmen namely Bhagadanta, Aranyaketu, Karkashrisha, Vratyasom and Pishtakeshi and two pen bearers.

The vital role in shaping the turbulent royal life of Vijaya is played by Prannarayan. He is the figure head and kingpin in initiating the inexperienced Vijaya into the intricacies of palace life and helps her to attain expertise in it. He makes her gradually comprehend that power games are rather different and difficult and a ruler has to be more than a human, either super human or even divine. He is Vijaya's tutor and his subtle revelations are received in proper spirit and Vijaya turns out to be more diplomatic than her father. Prannarayan's choric function helps the audience to get a detailed account regarding the off-stage events, the rapid development in Vijaya and the on - coming storms in Vijaya's life. Being a eunuch enables Prannarayan to shelter Vijaya like a father under his protective wings and to shape her with his motherly care and affections.
King Vichitravirya, though appears only for a short period, proves to be radiant, distinguished, cunning, diplomatic, shrewd, and autocratic. He enjoys ever growing popularity among the populace and petrifies his ministers with his accurate details of their professional dishonesty and easily intimidates them with his saucy and punchy remarks. His acumen with regard to his daughter as a dipstick proves wrong for Vijaya attains greater glory within a short span after her ascension to the throne.

The ministers are both types and individuals. They are all old and bored. Power, for them, is more important than duty and selfish designs have replaced service. They unabashedly acknowledge themselves as partners in the most profitable game of skullduggery. They accuse each other as unprincipled and characterless politicians. They endure the inevitable but at the same time retain their balance and peace of mind. They believe “politics itself is treachery - to the king, the country and the people... A true politician can be loyal only to himself” (288) and he should watch even the “greatest destruction dispassionately” (355). These ministers remind the conspirators of Julius Caesar in their aspiration but disprove to be men of fruitful action. Their relationship with the crown is built on “suspicion and intrigue”.

The various issues pertaining to the encounter between the cabinet and the crown are voiced out through two pen bearers who function as the chorus. Tendulkar with his tongue on the cheek mocks at the false value system inherent in life through them. These pen holders bear very large pens like spears. They praise the King or Queen, function as an advertising agency for the Government and highlight the sensational news to boost the circulation of their paper. “They wield the pens like sceptres suggesting the sway of the press in politics. This shows how the press misleads the people and dims their consciousness” (Babu 46). The significant contribution of these personalities as either the stepping stone or obstacles for Vijaya’s endeavours is appreciable.
Cunningness, hypocrisy, and treacherousness are the inextricable traits of politicians all around the world. This concept is further strengthened through Ghashiram too.

In this play, not merely the rulers but all the characters are also corrupt and decadent and the moral degeneration is cited through figure 27, which exhibits the Pune bramins' rejoicing in Bavanakani, the red light district. The pervasiveness of corruption, degeneration, and decadence is highlighted through three important presences namely Nana, Ghashiram, and the chorus. The Chorus consists of a group of twelve Brahmins and the Sutradhar.

The Theatre Academy says in production note, “the basic structure of the play is a human wall [figure 28] which is basically a singing and dancing chorus, impersonally commenting on the episodic developments” (Bandhyopadyay 589). The playwright achieves the desired effect with the effective utilization of the chorus. It also functions as a single character that represents the people who “play the victim” and remain “mute witnessing the unjust oppression” (Babu 75). Neela Bhalla’s finding is, “its participation is threefold. Some of them take on specific minor individual roles. They become props like doors, arches, and temples. Their most significant participation is as vehicles of satire” (99-100). Thus, the human wall adds a great deal of flexibility and variety to the acting space. It also underscores the comment that “the play is not about individuals but about a decadent class/ caste category” (Jain 112).

The role of the Sutradhar is as flexible and fluid as that of the human wall. He merges with the chorus, takes on an important or minor acting role. He comments on the action, speaks directly to the audience, or stands by as a mute spectator. The Sutradhar with his team of the human curtain exposes the pangs of humiliation, pent up fury, raging revenge, power manipulation, counter-manipulation, and resolution of both Ghashiram and the populace. The chorus makes Tendulkar’s task easy because he reveals through them the heartless exploitation, shameless corruption, and the cunning hypocrisy of the ruling community.
The supporting characters in Tendulkar’s plays thus, are not subordinate characters whose entry and exit are immaterial for the development of the plot or the progress of the action but are very vital, highly essential, and inevitable in executing the desired changes in the lives of the male and female protagonists. The presence of these figures on the stage insists on the importance of the workings of the collective force in determining the destiny of the prime most personalities. As unseen forces are also at work, there are some off-stage or back stage characters in Tendulkar’s plays, whose hand in deciding the course of the protagonists’ lives is remarkable and unquestionable.

Despite their invisibility, these off-stage characters cause great effect in and affect the lives of the on-stage figures. Anything that is out of sight is, in the course of time, erased out of mind too. The physical absence of these personages on the contrary, constantly reminds others of their prominence which threatens and nags other lives causing inexplicable woe, distress, and annoyance. They make no formal entry or exit but due to the exclusive attention and importance given to their roles in imparting the necessary changes and major alterations in the lives of the protagonists, they create an impression of being ever present.

Prof. Damle in Silence! never makes his appearance but the entire action of the play revolves around his illicit affair with Miss. Leela Benare. Benare, who has been contemptuous about and scornful towards other men, worships Prof. Damle as her intellectual God. Through the various conversations and arguments the co-actors have with Benare and among themselves, Prof. Damle can be assessed to be an utterly selfish, a highly calculating, and heartless manipulator. This intellectual giant is a moral coward with no grit to face challenges and solve problems. Benare’s intellectual aspiration and academic zeal are cunningly used with vested interest by him. Possessing nothing and desiring nothing, in great earnestness she has offered herself but it is her body that has mattered to Prof. Damle and he mercilessly brushes her and her present predicament aside. Her yearnings for perennial joy in his intellectual companionship end up in fleeting pleasure and eternal condemnation. Ultimately she is being charged as a sinner and criminal. It is due to his
absence that she becomes defenceless and her co-actors have mustered courage to use her as the scapegoat and denounce her as licentious. While her personal life and reputation are at stake because of this man, her academic life is in danger because of the proposed dismissal of her by the chairman of the Education Society, Nanasaheb Shinde, another back stage figure.

In Kamala, Jaisingh, a brilliant and brave journalist, risks his life in order to expose scandals, feeds the paper with sensational news, and succeeds in increasing the circulation of the paper. Through his latest venture, he successfully outmaneuvers the political authorities by exposing the existence of the flesh trade and thus steps and trespasses on powerful toes for which he is summarily dismissed from service by his proprietor Sheth Shenhenia. It is the mention of the decision of this off-stage figure that turns Jaisingh's world topsy-turvy.

*Encounter* "unveils the essential nature of the game of politics as also the basic craving for power in human nature. . . . It exposes the intricate political intrigues designed to attain positions of authority and the corruption involved in holding on to them" (Banerjee 573-74). This has been mainly highlighted through the Kadamba tribe issue. The cunningness, hypocrisy, double standard and immorality of the ministers and the intelligence and sharpness with which Vijaya vanquishes her enemies are elucidated through this Kadamba issue. Much hue and cry has been made about her meeting the tribe, the resultant change in her attitude and the ultimate decision that has incurred the wrath of her ministers but the Kadamba tribe never makes its presence on the stage. It is because of them, the metamorphosis in Vijaya is brought to light. The infuriated mob and its violence have also been only reported but they do stir a real hornet's nest in the minds of the ministers.

In Sakharam, Lakshmi's nephew in Amalnar is an off-stage player. Using him as the trump card, Laxmi materializes her re-entry into Sakharam's house which ultimately earns her everlasting safety and security. In The Vultures, a play of family feuds and bloody actions, the greed for money designs the members as cruel, inhuman, and loveless. Manik's affair with the Raja of Hondur, a back stage personality is cherished as the much aspired golden opportunity to fill their pockets with money by her brothers. Much has been schemed
to squeeze money from him, but the unforeseen sudden death of the Raja of Hondur is the severest bolt from the blue for Ramakant. Through his brutal kicking which has aborted out the foetus in Manik, Tendulkar has “mercilessly exposed the ravaging beast that lay waiting in every human being” (Lagoo qtd. in Gokhale 197).

In Ghāshirām, Ghāshirām’s wife is never visible but the tormented soul’s cry is depicted by Ghāshirām only to gain a better and firm ground over Nana. Peshwa is the other off-stage personality who plays a significant role in shaping the destiny of Ghāshirām, Nana Phadnavis, and the people. It is the mention of his annoyance and command that has sped up Nana to order for the execution of Ghāshirām. The off stage characters thus insist on their inevitability and dire necessity by being essential instruments in effecting and precipitating the crisis in the lives of the protagonists.

Propelled by an urgent need “to discover, to express, to assert, to reveal and occasionally, to explode” (Gokhale 79) and also prompted by an innate and inner “compulsion to lock with life on paper” (Gokhale 79) Tendulkar’s creative genius has brought forth this stupendous output. He has freely allowed his characters to be independent which gives his plays “the ring of socio-psychological truth” (Gokhale 79). What is being perceived in humanity has only been dramatized by Tendulkar. His awareness that “the individual is largely disempowered, made abject, reduced to the role of spectator by the logic of certain events and social grouping” (Pai 188) has endowed him with the required compassion and understanding to analyze the problems of life objectively and portray them dispassionately. Having comprehended the complex nature of the human mind, his aspiration is to reveal the truth about man which, though is sure to shock the common man, will certainly raise his conscience and prepare him to struggle for social and political change.

Tendulkar’s male characters can be grouped into two, as representative of man’s covert and overt bestiality. The men in Silence!, Kamala, A Friend’s Story and Encounter are more hypocritical and cunning because they execute their violent impulse under the safe garb of morality, patriotism, and dedication or commitment to profession. The other group is
insensitive and shameless and openly exhibits its bravado. The dramatic personages of The Vultures, Sakharam, Ghashiram, and Kanyadaan fall into this category. Nana Phadnavis and Arun Athavele are highly adept in both ways making their lives highly secure while subjecting that of others to grave danger. Whatever of foul these beings possess is all in the head. They have no heart to guide or inspire their understanding. Without affection, they are also without shame. They have something witching within them that converted the milk of humanity to venom.

Sex, hunting instinct, and violence are primitive urges and man has been claiming that he has toned his primitive urges within the framework of ethics but which in reality lay dormant and produce a volcanic effect at the slightest provocation. “Animals commit violence as a natural part of their behaviour, and never appear to extract any special pleasure from the act of their violence” (Mirajkar 87). It is a distressing truth that human beings derive morbid pleasure and malicious glee at the bitter and painful consequences of their gory deeds. The sadistic happiness obtained by the co-actors in Silence! with their heartless expression of the mock trial as a “mere game”, the rejoicing of the brothers about the advantage of their football practice in kicking out the growing life in Manik, the expression of Ghashiram with gleaming and glittering eyes at the sight of his blood smeared hands and Nana’s sense of relief because for all the evil things that he is going to do, his Kotwal would be penalized, the ecstasy of Sakharam over the burnt foot of Laxmi, Dalvi’s happiness at Mitra’s distress, the ministers’ glee at the sufferings of Vijaya and the mob, Jaisingh’s and Jain’s sense of triumph at the discomfiture of Kamala and Arun’s crude satisfaction at Seva’s annoyance proclaim the inner savagery in all exposing the people whose “lips are full of lovely worn-out phrases and bellies are full of unsatisfied desires” (Silence! 117). Tendulkar’s men are selfish, hypocritical, brutal, and ambitious.

Vijay Tendulkar is renowned for his “complex and perspicacious handling of social concerns and even more so for his engagement with the palpitating pulse of female sensibility” (Jain 91). Tendulkar’s women emerge as the columns and beams on which he
has built his structures. Though they are different in behavioural traits, class, and characters, in the ultimate truth of "being commanded by men, for their pleasure and under their laws" (Gokhale 81) they resemble each other. Tendulkar has gifted his women with fighting spirit. His women "choose and dare to fight their own battles and therefore, also lose sometimes as they must. Their efforts, however, whether culminating in utter distraught, anguish, or in hopeful resolutions are profound expression of their quest" (Jain 91).

Tendulkar has poignantly and straightforwardly depicted the apparent helplessness, eventual victimization, and merciless marginalization of this vast majority. Though a certain obvious desensitization is imposed, women do not allow themselves to be easily crushed or cowed down. In certain cases, defeats are more triumphant than victory. Tendulkar satirizes the "utter impotence of the 'macho' males who find themselves suddenly emasculated when confronted by enlightened women" (Dharan 57). These women anger, mystify, and bemuse their male counterparts. Women are the stepping stones in the lives of men but men pose as the stumbling blocks on the ways of women. Their adaptability, resilience, and endurance mostly force them to reconcile with the prevailing environment. Even then there is perceivable transformation or evolution in women.

Benare, from being a buoyant, belligerent, sprightly, and rebellious woman is reduced to a betrayed and hunted pray. Laxmi, the hapless destitute emerges as the all powerful protector or saviour of Sakkharam. Rama, from an eager expectant mother is benumbed to a block of stone. Sarita's docility is converted into assertiveness. Vijaya is not a mere marionette but a shrewd and diplomatic dictator. Mitra, the head strong and self-willed woman becomes a miserable victim. The most inconsolable change is that of Jyoti's, who from a soft spoken, highly cultivated, and principled brahmin girl is changed into a hardened and disillusioned dalit girl. She is the real victim of circumstances and resigns to lead a shadowy existence for no fault of hers. Even the sage Manu and the great poet Kalidasa have bestowed on woman the "status of a minion who is constantly required to magnify the competencies and to boost up man's ego and conversely to diminish her skill and to smother her discreet sense of
justice" (Pathak 15). Critics charge Tendulkar that despite sharp intelligence and bright spark of revolt, he has made his women lose out in the end. They typify defeat except in Vijaya’s case. Tendulkar, however, does not consider them to be static or beaten. His justification is, “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 to her advantage” (Tendulkar Femina 37).

Tendulkar, a keen observer of life, has declared through his characters that personality traits, coping skills, psychological conflicts, and biological factors determine the vulnerability or resilience of an individual. They are not paragons of virtues but vulnerable persons endowed with positive and negative traits. Tendulkar, on the whole, has drafted his characters as “sham less creatures seeking gratification without concern for any code of conduct” (Mirajkar 83). Though none of them is good, they can not be discarded “as aberrations of humanity” (Gokhale 203). They are base, uncultured, irreligious people without family bonds but their ambitions, disappointments and loneliness are visualized as real by the audience.

The writer’s forte is the exploration of the interior world. He plunges into the limitless depths of the mind and analyses the hidden contours of the human psyche capturing the passing fancies and fleeting thoughts. Tendulkar has said, “I have drifted to the middle of the current of life. I now feel its unfathomable depths. Like the sea-birds, I am soaring aimlessly, casually and calmly. I have only one desire. How deep would be the bottom? How would it appear?” (Barve 25). This main thrust on the inner life of the individuals with his sharp awareness of the complexities of existence is comprehensible in the delineation of every character.

The belief that, man a fallen being is gripped by original sin and his nature is sinful and state perilous proves to be true with regard to Tendulkar’s characters because even the outwardly decent folks have their own dark interior. His plays deal with certain “constants in human nature namely the bestiality in man, the violence in his nature barely contained
beneath the surface, his predilection to lust and immorality and his instinct for self preservation” (Bhalla 11). He has portrayed the utter degradation of various strata of society signifying the downfall of morality and ethical values and has trumpeted the hollowness and hypocrisy of man - made institutions during the process of civilization.

Tendulkar’s creative writing begins not from an idea but, he says, “from an experience, mine or somebody else’s which then becomes mine” (Gokhale 104). Hence, the exposure of the hypocrisy, selfishness, sham moral standards, and the latent sadism are not exaggerations but bare essentials in order to highlight the chauvinistic male oppressors. His men are victimizers and his women are victims. Yet he has deliberately given his women characters “a greater variety and depth - and thus a definite edge, over - to their male counterparts” (Dharan 49). In spite of their highhandedness and head strong chauvinistic disposition, the happiness, security, and peace of mind of men are to be determined by the unsolicited co-operation and heart- warming support rendered by their women. While women are the sole means to save men from their crestfallen state, men are the root cause for women’s desolated hapless condition.

Every work of art is a reverential contribution to the society. Theatre, a communal art, involves the audience into the happenings on the stage. The visual enactment of the steep decline in human value and virtues is expected to perturb the conscience of the audience because it forces them to realize the moral deterioration prevalent all around. Tendulkar says, “A play is a work of art when it reveals its theme and essence exclusively through its mode and attendant detailing rather than through statement and speech” (Gokhale 106). The extent to which he has achieved this strenuous and challenging task of exemplifying his themes through innovative and effective stage techniques in his plays is to be analyzed in the next chapter, “Amazing Artistry”.