CURTAIN - DOWN
CHAPTER - V
CURTAIN-DOWN

They come to look, and they love most to see.
If much is spun about before their eyes,
So that the crowd can in amazement gape
You will have won in breadth immediately,
You'll be a much beloved man. (Goethe qtd. in Esslin 77-78)

Goethe’s brilliant statement discloses the fact that an accomplished playwright, through
his play, efficiently manipulates its action to steer the ideas resolutely home, and takes his
audience along a planned course, his “line of intention”, which leads the hypnotized viewers
into the revealing action offering them aesthetic gratification, inner illumination, clear
perception, and critical rumination. With such an effective presentation, the dramatist will
win hands down his spectators’ attention as well as good will for the mystique of theatre
prompts the play goers to willingly submit themselves to be swayed away by the emotional
current that gushes out in the form of internal or external conflicts. Drama, thus, has the
power to create an emotional experience of the utmost intensity similar to religious and
mystical ecstasy.

The visual presentation and representation of the mimesis of life on the stage offer its
viewers opportunities to experience theatre as an exciting, active, and important social
institution. The evolution of drama, as discussed in the introductory chapter, commenced
with the classical Greek plays. During the ancient times, dramatists manipulated
mythological sources and brought on the stage Gods and Goddesses. Fascinating and
captivating means like mimes, songs, and dances were utilized to drive home the point.
Gradually the focus was on the royal life projecting its cunning diplomacy, constant power
struggle, and enchanting intrigues in the harem. While the ritualistic, participatory, and
communal folk stage was experienced to be an exciting, enthralling, and ecstatic
entertainment by the audience, the western theatre practitioners detected that to be an
exciting source to rejuvenate their theatre. Contemporary Indian dramatists too turn to the folk form in their effort to link the westernized urban theatre with an indigenous theatrical tradition. Through this cross fertilization, they have created a distinctively modern Indian theatre.

The change in the form has paved the way for the change in the subject also. The playwrights have shifted their focus from the palace to the home and riveted their attention on common man and his confrontation with life. The visual projection of the ordinariness has enhanced the status of theatre from being a mere entertainment centre to that of a significantly active, important, and integral part of communal life. Such picturizations have enabled the viewers to identify themselves with the characters on the dais, to seek redress to various prevalent woes, to pacify themselves by the surge of emotional release and to find solutions to the persisting problems. Theatre, thus, has become an inextricable and a vibrant social act and people have perceived its importance in their personal and social life. Aristotle’s notion on ‘Catharsis’ further substantiates the claim that theatre is exciting, active, and important.

In India, drama is not merely an art, but is revered as the Fifth Veda because of its power to delight, instruct, and transform. The potency of drama to transform is authenticated from the autobiographical reference of Gandhiji. Gandhi, revered as the “Father of India”, vowed never to tell lies only after watching a play about Harichandra, a King who devoted his life to practise truth. Such being the power of theatre, through it, playwrights yearn to enlighten their spectators on exploitation, educate on rights and privileges, and above all to evolve them into fine, sensitive, and sensible human beings. Dramatists strive to achieve this through the dramatic medium. A play is a kind of dream, something which appears real enough while it lasts, but from which the audience wake to acknowledge that it is in fact unreal. It is in the delicate relation between belief and disbelief, between the dream life of the play and the real life in the play’s presentation that the mystique surrounds and sustains. The exact reason for the everlasting impact that drama exercises on the human mind is
accurately defined by Dr. Johnson. He observes, "Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind" (260).

While analyzing the mystique of theatre, a reference has been made denoting the various devices used in the electronic media to hold the interest of the viewers or listeners. The greatest advantage of stage drama is that every moment of it is a direct visual and aural sign of the reproduced reality and it can adapt the content of the play to suit to the requirement of the changing circumstances. Playwrights, right from the ancient period, have been significantly contributing to the evolution of this literary genre. A study of the quartet of dramatists Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad, and Vijay Tendulkar, who emerged in the 1960s, shows their absolute commitment and total dedication to convert the stage into a world, by turning actors into people, language into action, and art into life. Their creative energy, exuberant experimentation with dramatic convention, and uncommon manipulations of materials that set aside the usual laws governing the behaviour of matter in space and time exemplify their involvement in life and art. Their contribution to modernize the content of Indian theatre deserves a special mention.

The humanist in Tendulkar has overpowered the dramatist in him and his profound concern for the afflicted man is revealed solidly in his plays. His exposure to theatre from his childhood has genuinely stimulated in him a sharp eye to watch the behavioural pattern, a keen mind to observe the subtle nuances, and an uncanny ear to listen to the speech patterns of people. Tendulkar, as a person, has earnestly attempted to look at life and understand it in a fresh way untrammelled by outmoded theories. As a playwright he was at the helm of a revolting generation that had overthrown the established norms of script writing and created a legacy of experimentation. In his apprentice days, he watched many badly structured plays and perceived that a play cannot be just a chain of events. He had also clearly understood that mere skating on a broad theme or relying on a message without a strong undercurrent would wilt to a flat tameness. A playwright, he has realized, has to conceive the undercurrent together with the content and modulate it through craft consciousness. His
theatrical experimentation has taught him to skilfully balance everything—technique, time, imagination, art, feeling, and spontaneity, and such a fascinating fusion of them has enhanced the charm of his plays leading to the knot being unknotted.

Tendulkar has a prodigious output of thirty-two plays in his oeuvre which are staged time and again. Among them *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *Kamala, Sakharam Binder*, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *The Vultures*, *Kanyadaan*, *A Friend’s Story* and *Encounter in Umbagland* are analyzed accounting his social and artistic concerns for the mystique of his theatre. As the audience watch the action unfolds before their eyes, they begin to grasp his dramatic potential to depict interesting situations in an emotionally charged atmosphere. In his plays, he has successfully sustained coherent action, accommodated realistic characters, presented animated dialogue, and above all impressed them with “the burst of experimental energy” in theatre techniques. Efforts are taken to incorporate pictures from Tendulkar’s plays as visual illustrations to highlight the mystique of theatre.

Influenced by the features of Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty, Camus’ Theatre of the Absurd, and Brecht’s Epic Theatre, Tendulkar has perfectly blended them in his plays and the result is intensely terrific. His audiences find in his theatre not escape, but the realization of their worst nightmares and deepest fears because his plays have mercilessly disclosed their latent tendencies and susceptibilities to violent behaviour. Crucial social issues turn life uncertain and insecure ultimately driving man to a helpless and victimized state. Tendulkar’s plays blatantly portray man’s desperate and ceaseless struggle for survival which eventually unveils his peculiar and freakish traits. The playwright’s competent and adept use of naturalistic and non-naturalistic devices enables his audience both to exercise “voluntary remission of judgment” and to make a rational assessment of the visual enactment of significant affairs of life on the stage. The meritorious fusion of illusion and reality sings the glory of the writer’s amazing artistry.

While the literary ambience at home provided by his father, a theatre aficionado, has sharpened Tendulkar’s theatrical sensibility, the awesome scenes he witnessed at home and
the terrific spectacles he viewed from his balcony have brought him come to terms with the oddities of life. A mute and chilling visual of his frightened mother being threatened by his hot tempered, angry, and menacing father, the untimely and gruesome end of his brilliant brother Raghunath, who succumbed to alcohol and found dead in a ditch, the various communal riots, their violent outbreaks, and the resultant incidents of furious stabbing were ingrained in his juvenile mind. He began to perceive the existence of gender bias, the failure of certain social institutions and man’s victimized state. He has firmly refused to pamper either himself or his audiences with illusions and has never shied away from revealing truths which are unpalatable and even unutterable. He does not want to go through life with blinkers on. As he intends to share all that he has detected, individual versus society turns out to be his most favourite theme and his enduring contribution to the world of theatre.

A study of the crucial factors of life namely the gender discrimination prevalent in the patriarchal society, the effects of power manipulation, and the bestial nature of humanity under the caption “Latent Tendencies”, shows that Tendulkar has made an unbiased reporting of the inherent nature of man in all these eight plays. His women do not receive any recognition either at home or in the society. His plays debunk the myths about family as a place of security, comfort, and protection. They also bring out the sham, hypocrisy, and the double standards the social mores grant for men and women. In Sakharam, under the terrible scrutiny of Tendulkar’s critical eye, all the romance, glamour, and sanctity of marriage vanish into thin air. Sakharam, an antidote to the image of a romantic hero, lays bare the politics of ownership, property, and right of possession. Silence! launches a fierce attack on the ideology of the glorification of unwed motherhood. It presents a critical view of the double standards of morality for men and women and also exposes the asymmetrical relationship of power between husband and wife and between married and unmarried women.

Kamala deals with the problem of negligible value of woman as commodity in the modern world simultaneously disclosing how even the state machinery is involved in the heinous
crime of trafficking women. Kanyadaan and Ghashiram locate family and gender relations in
the larger contexts of the caste conflict and the corrupt nature of state respectively. In The
Vultures, the playwright has demonstrated the bestiality and monstrosity of people in a
family that subjects its women to merciless inhuman treatment. In the society, rebellious and
audacious lesbians like Mitra in A Friend's Story cannot be always assertive and their
peculiar nature and desire ultimately drive them to meet with an unnatural end. Only in the
political scenario, a woman endowed with diplomacy, shrewdness, and wisdom, as is Vijaya
in Encounter, strives incessantly to overcome a host of wilful obstacles and accomplishes
herself as an empowered queen implementing her designs into actions.

Women are represented as “passive carriers of familial ideologies” without any personal
will for change. Except Benare, and Sarita to some extent, others do not assert their
individuality, right of choice, right over their own bodies, and rights as human beings. They
are basically projected as victims of the patriarchal system which they can neither challenge
nor change since they have meekly submitted themselves to be shaped, conditioned, and
marginalized by it.

Man asserts his individuality, affirms his right and power over the other gender, and
unhesitatingly unleashes violence on them. In his effort to ascertain his superiority, he
mercilessly subjugates his female counterpart. The manipulation of power is exemplified
applying Steiner’s “Rescue Triangle”. People at the top of the rungs of power ladder usurp
the colossal power of the masses at the bottom and remain more privileged and powerful.
Those at the bottom make ceaseless attempt and struggle hard to scramble up the ladder of
power. During such maelstrom, people undertake the roles of Rescuer, Persecutor and
Victim. Tendulkar, in his plays, has revealed the tremendous capacity of the multifarious
forms of power to intimidate everyone at one point of time. The afflictions of a miserable
victim, the intoxication experienced by a rescuer and the thrill of a persecutor expose the
merciless oppression, lugubrious exploitation, and pent up frustration.
The patriarchal power in *Sakharam*, the judicial power in *Silence!*, the political power in *Ghashiram* and *Encounter*, the police power in *Ghashiram*, the filial power in *The Vultures*, the power of investigative journalism in *Kamala*, the power of principles and caste system in *Kanyadaan*, and the power of cultural values in *A Friend's Story* plainly project that the prey as well as the predator are both victims within a larger frame of reference. Tendulkar's observation of the importance of power and its aftermath forces him to present a too terrifying representation of life, which discloses the ruthless machinery of power namely violence.

Violence is an inherent, inevitable, and inextricable part of the human milieu, human behavior, and human mind. In full throated ease, Tendulkar proclaims that it is omnipresent and omnipotent by clearly and cleverly depicting its power to afflict persons physically, psychologically, and verbally. The graphic portrayal of violence in all its goriness imposed and experienced at the three levels, hold the actors as well as the audience in thrall.

Physical assault is absolutely absent in *Silence!* and *Kamala* but verbal attack is too vehement in them. Words prove to be mightier in *A Friend's Story* also. Violent actions speak louder in *Ghashiram* and *Sakharam*. The avant-garde playwright Tendulkar has skilfully brought out the enormous power of violence by revealing their devastating consequences suggestively in *The Vultures*, *Kanyadaan*, and *Encounter*. Implied violence has more lasting effect on the audience than the displayed one.

Tendulkar’s plays lay bare the unbridled violence of the human spirit which is let loose in a murky dehumanized environment, whose only stable characteristic is social and individual unrest. The intense impulse of these restless persons to indulge in inconceivable violence and to exhibit their arrogant inhuman nature is unveiled honestly by the dramatist. An analysis of the traits of his dramatic personages is undertaken in the chapter “Unveiling”. His 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 themselves and others. The men in general are victimizers and they exploit women. The
inherent potent fury in a few male figures is due to the latent impressions tattooed in their minds during the formative years of tender childhood. The merciless and inhuman treatments experienced leave an indelible ugly scar in the minds of Sakharam in Sahkaram, Arun in Kanyadaan and Ramakant in The Vultures and they turn out to be arrogant, heartless, bestial, and barbaric in their manners with absolute disregard for the feelings of others.

The next group of characters, despite their strenuous efforts to be unselfish, and idealistic, cannot practise their long cherished ideals successfully. Nath in Kanyadaan, Jaisingh Jadav in Kamala, and Bapu in A Friend's Story fight against the vile practices in the society in order to redress the afflictions of people. Their mad obsession with their ideal notions makes them turn blind to the inconvenience their principles caused on others. These pseudo-champions eventually turn out to be victims as well as victimizers. The gruesome change taking place in a humble and servile poor man when endowed with unlimited power and authority is adroitly put forth through Ghashiram in Ghashiram. The devastating effects that violence and bestiality with their hands in glove with lasciviousness and self-interested manipulation caused on innocent public are eye-catchingly displayed through Ghashiram and Nana Phadnavis. There is a perceptible change only in a few towards the end of the play and others do not change their colour though they are dazed and dumbstruck at the unforeseen boomerang effect their acts have led to. On the whole, Tendulkar's male characters represent man's covert and overt bestiality.

Tendulkar's portrayal of female characters reveals his rare awareness and understanding of the feminine sensibility and insight into the intricate female psychology. They are neither romanticized nor idealized but are human beings with flesh and blood ranging from the gullible to the clever, malleable to the stubborn, conservative to the rebellious and from the self-sacrificing to the grasping. These women, in acquiescence with the destined roles, become willing torch-bearers and mute sufferers with an instantaneous readiness to bear the cross. They are depicted in pairs in order to highlight their contrastive and complex nature. They function as foil to each other emphasizing as well as enhancing their unique traits.
Tendulkar’s creative hands are equally at ease when carving traditional models like Rama or Laxmi and peculiar personalities like Champa, the femme fatale, Manik, the monstrous schemer and Sumitra Dev, the immodest lesbian. The might of a woman in the political arena is best brought out through the evolution and blossoming of Vijaya in *Encounter* from a garrulous and half-witted obstinate girl to a diplomatic and an ambitious dictator.

The retention of compassion and humaneness despite the deep internalization of patriarchal standards and the inhuman treatment experienced in the hands of their male counterparts is the most impressive feature of Tendulkar’s women. They are commanded by men for their pleasure. Their apparent helplessness, merciless marginalization, and eventual victimization are poignantly presented. Their adaptability, resilience, and endurance pave the way for the positive evolution in some and negative degradation in the others. From a sprightly and rebellious woman, Benare, in *Silence!* is reduced to a betrayed and hunted prey. Laxmi, the hapless destitute in *Sakharam* emerges as the powerful protector. From being an eager expectant mother Rama in *The Vultures* is benumbed to a block of stone. Sarita’s docility in *Kamala* is converted into assertiveness. Vijaya in *Encounter* is not a marionette but an able administrator. Mitra, the head strong and self-willed woman in *A Friend’s Story* becomes a miserable victim. The most unendurable change is that of Jyoti in *Kanyadaan,* who from being a highly cultivated and principled person is shaped into a hardened and disillusioned figure.

Despite the merciless victimization, women bury their woman consciousness, remain humane, render unsolicited co-operation and heart-warming support, and aspire to save men from their crest fallen state. This victor-victim syndrome is made abreast with the help of the supporting characters whose role in effecting the desired result is indispensible. They play multifarious roles - as individuals teeming with special traits, choric commentators, and chorus. Their entry and exit significantly contribute to the development of the plot and the delineation of characters. The adept use of the dramatic devices is best brought out in the
deft handling of the off-stage characters. As unforeseen forces are actively at work, these back stage figures exacerbate the crisis and expedite the fall of the protagonists.

Tendulkar’s astounding inventive ability is further enhanced through his dramaturgy which is studied under the title “Amazing Artistry”. He knows for certain that drama, defined as lyricism plus mime, lays equal importance on word and deed. Hence the thought sown in the mind of this creative artist, germinates into a literary text and attains fruition and completion when translated into sights, sounds, and actions. An amalgamation of the various aural, verbal, and visual structures aided with competent acting shapes up his dramatic performances and results in the metamorphosis of the fictitious scene springing to life determining the power and effect of them on the audience. The structures of the dramatic text are firmly rooted in the web of the themes with strong undercurrent which create a fresh, an immediate and everlasting impact on his startled audience.

The perceptible common devices have different functions in each play. Telephone, a tool for communication, in the creative hands of Tendulkar becomes a crucial and powerful device because through it he exhibits the inner turmoil of the characters in Kamala, exposes the hypocrisy of the people in The Vultures, and hints at the helplessness of human beings in Kanyadaan. The general atmosphere of moral and spiritual degradation is established through the drunken behaviour of the persons in Kamala, The Vultures, Sakharam, A Friend’s Story and Kanyadaan. The latent violence inherent in all the characters and the complexity of the human psyche are excellently revealed through this device.

Tendulkar’s sui generis method in the employment of chorus deserves special consideration. His efficacious and skilful incorporation of the choric characters has made his plays distinct. The most striking innovation is the creation of the chorus as the swaying human curtain under the leadership of the Sutradhar in Ghashiram, which serves as an excellent symbol of the mechanism of secrecy, hiding and revealing happenings. This human curtain is an inextricably integrated part essential and appropriate to the creation of an environment of intrigue, hypocrisy, greed, and brutality.
Tendulkar's dialogic design is appreciated far and wide for all its economy, simplicity, compression, and precision. It demonstrates his surprising range of inventiveness in attaining the exact verbal idiom with its precise echo, sound, sense, and rhythm. He focuses his lingual lens on man's self-scrutiny. The suppressed and silenced victims' innate anguish, unfulfilled desire, and existential dilemma get an eloquent vent through the carefully designed verbal structures like the soliloquies, monologues, and long speeches. Their verbal idiom registers the frivolity, infirmity, and frailty of their existence. The soliloquies in Tendulkar's plays are as arresting and revealing as those in Shakespeare's plays. They are, in fact, "dramas of self-confrontation" which brilliantly disclose the contemplators' manipulative skill and complex nature. The monologues are transparent "soul-reflectors" which enable the viewers to share the inner turbulence of the characters and be infected with their passion. Using the form of a long dialogue, the playwright subjects to clinical satire social institutions like marriage, politics, investigative journalism, and casteism and holds them all to ruthless sarcasm.

Oppressed aggressions are subtly and adroitly released through the appropriately contrived language patterns like silence, pauses, and incomplete sentences, and silence, which suggests an undercurrent of latent, heavily condensed, and highly charged dramatic meaning. Tendulkar has picturesquely projected how one's power of articulation fails during moments of crisis and the resultant telling silence conveys the afflicted soul's suppressed emotions. The more acute the experience, the less articulate is its expression. The incorporation of the narrative methods like flash-back, episodic, natural sequence, and reversal is appropriate and sustains the grip on the audience. Scene contrasts serve effectively as intensifiers though function as relievers too.

The various recorded and actor-operated sound segments fused with apt spectacles and exhibited through gripping action create a violent and searing impact on its spectators. The songs employed in Silence! and Ghashiram certainly do not break the flow of the action but establish the emotional continuity effectively. The next admirable trait about Tendulkar's
plays is his elaborate stage direction. They certify the playwright’s mastery over theatrical craft for they embolden and ensure even a novice to make a successful maiden attempt with confidence and ease.

The dramatist’s inventive skill aided by innate perceptiveness and clear vision has helped him to opt for stage properties which are vital to the demonstration of the action. Their appropriateness and essentiality are illuminated through the best “visual metaphor”- lighting. It is a means of visual communication and visual learning. The “deictic” function of light in Tendulkar’s plays enables the viewers to get a glimpse of the emotions experienced at the innermost recesses of his characters. Lighting, thus, plays an important part in designing shapes, colouring and texturing surface, and emphasizing actors and actions.

In Tendulkar’s tour de force Ghashiram, his effective communicative power unfurls in the design of a mime structure. Each mime is an exquisite and exuberant visual treat which has transported the spectators to the heart of what theatre is. The effect of rising fury, the goriest punishments, quick change of locale, and the mob behaviour appropriate for the event are successfully accomplished through the acting devices of mime.

The most astounding point about Tendulkar’s plays is the employment of unique narrative forms for his works. His creative endeavour has capacitated him to adopt exciting narrative modes with which his audiences are enthralled. He shakes his theatre-goers of Silence! with a mock trial. The watchers of Ghashiram are bewitched with the dazzling display of dance, music, and the human curtain. The cataclysmic issues like casteism and lesbianism with which the society is obsessed and afflicted are exposed through Kanyadaan and A Friend’s Story respectively, which agitate and alarm the viewers through the clever manipulation of words, light, and sound. The ruthless domestic violence unleashed in The Vultures and Sakharam inherits the hue of eeriness and repulsion through the brilliant blend of narration with haunting sounds that unnerve the flabbergasted spectators. The successful encounter of Queen Vijaya in Encounter enlightens her audience with the diplomatic use of the chorus and with the distinct fusion of the sound to the action.
Tendulkar's writing skill reigns supreme in his plays which remain a defining entity in contemporary Indian theatre and a microcosm of the twentieth century middle-class India. While his contemporaries were safely exploring the social realism, he broke that tradition convincingly and boldly jumped straight into the cauldron of political radicalism and ruthlessly exposed political hegemony of the most powerful and the prevalent hypocrisies of Indian social mindsets. His penetrating eye for human angst and his true and resplendent expression of it has got him worldwide acclaim.

Tendulkar, a social critic of traditional India, has been revered for his rare insight into human nature and courage of conviction and has also been denigrated for the merciless dissection of social aberrations with particular emphasis on the baser instincts in man that has stupefied his audience. His plays challenge accepted concepts and norms pertaining to morality in society and bring to the fore the hidden cruelty and lust in the human psyche, exposing the hypocrisy that covered it.

Tendulkar has witnessed the brutal ways of life and detected that life is dark and cruel. He is deeply perturbed by what he saw, but is happy about the exposure, because that has helped him to see the truth. His creations are the outcome of his keen observation of the sordid realities of life. The pain he has written about is certainly not hypothetical but real and the world of sorrow created by him is never mere imagination but bitter truth.

It is this exploration into the gory realities of life and their naked display that arrest the attention of the audience. The searing dissection of human venality in The Vultures, a literary scanning of the modern Indian family through an unconventional marriage in Kanyadaan, the deft blend of social satire with the classic case of an individualist who falls a prey to the booby trap laid in the name of social norms in Silence!, the analysis of the making and breaking of power with its attendant forces of religion, sex, and violence in Ghashiram, the indictment of success defined, male dominated society also highlighting the investigative exploit of journalism into the trade of women in Kamala, the unconventional and highly bothering same sex relationship in A Friend's Story, and the inhuman manipulations of the
power-mongers in *Encounter* expose Tendulkar's profound concern, keen observation, and creative ability.

Tendulkar's plays are studded with unforgettable personae like Sakharam Binder, now acclaimed as spell-binder, the power-hungry Ghashiram, the non-conformist Leela Benare and the strong-willed Mitra. Noted for gritty realism, Tendulkar has created characters, who are as real and ordinary as his audiences, but has still made heroes out of them. They are "devoid of ostentation, affectation, and bravado" in their "attire, demeanour, and attitude". Yet he has adroitly projected their turbulence when torn between the values imbibed or imposed and the gruesome reality which prompts them to behave otherwise.

While demonstrating life, Tendulkar has avoided sentimentality and pretence. His gaze, on the other hand, has empathy and fellow-feeling. He never judges his protagonists but concentrates on painting them with unsettling compassion, perceptiveness, and thoroughness. Endowed with the extraordinary power to probe, analyze, and interpret the workings of the untrodden regimes in the human psyche, he can clearly perceive the moral and psychological dilemmas of his characters, who mercilessly exploit and are heartlessly exploited.

Tendulkar's searing vision is further sharpened by his research on the "Emerging Patterns of Violence". The result of this study is that every bit of his creative writing is endowed with "a genuine complexity of experienced reality". The conscientious human in him has crusaded tirelessly to expose the corruption, exploitation, and violence that suffuse in the society. Watching his plays is equal to be "a witness to the violence of a stripping - nakedness being put on display. But this was not a striptease. It was an angry stripping away of the illusions hiding something that was both aggressive and hideous" (Kumar Reminiscences 3). The audiences are certainly not titillated but are touched by the spirit of rebellion. They are frozen to the marrow yet cannot but empathize with the character's authentic portrayal. Amitava Kumar opines that Sakharam, Ghashi, Nishant, Manthan and others are not mere names but are "milestones on the road to discovery" (Reminiscences 3).
Tendulkar’s plays dramatically illustrate his complete mastery of theatre as an art form and his interpretative access to folk performing devices. The stage properties in his plays are essential instruments that offer an integral expression of meaning which is indivisible and indispensable in performance. His consummate use of language ranges from the “delicately nuanced, crisp, and ironic to the powerfully poetic, rhythmical, discursive, and rhetorical” (De 2). The words are neither diffident nor ostentatious. Every word is at home taking its place to support the others. A few find the repetitive speech structure in Sakharam a little annoying but recurrence here institutes, as Dewey has observed a “new longing, incites a fresh curiosity and establishes a changed suspense” (169) because it is repeated in a different context conveying different meaning. Whether it is in page after page in the text or scene after scene on the stage, Tendulkar reveals himself as a keen observer of the human plane, “cued into the ways of the mind and the tongue” (De 2).

Tendulkar’s undying passion for this magical world theatre has stimulated him to experiment incessantly with its form and content. His plays are for those who have the moral strength and blistering honesty to see the world without rose tinted glasses on because they are the spontaneous overflow of the “rage of a radical consciousness”. His brain children sear the consciousness of his spectators, bring them face-to-face with their hypocrisies, lay bare the intrigues of political courts and hold them in thrall by sheer narrative power with each taut scene imbued with dramatic tension. The judicious permutations of the features of drama lure his audience to willingly suspend their sense of disbelief, plunge them deep into the gripping action of the stage, carry them away into the mystique of his theatre and the spell-bound audience naturally and eventually “succumb to Tendulkar’s verbal wizardry”.

Some information about the nature of human being is the most valuable offering that drama can make which will keep the interest of the viewers alert and alive. Tendulkar’s creative writing reflects his passionate observation and commentary on the state of the human world. This vibrant theatre activist proudly acknowledged that his experiences as a playwright had made him grow as a real human being because he wrote not for a living but
“for life and to be alive”. As his association with theatre has evolved him into a human, he aspires to tune the minds of his readers and audience with demonstrations of his unyielding scrutiny of life and to make them realize the value of themselves and their lives on the earth. His plays, with their inimitable quality, hard-hitting strength, and painful relevance are clarion calls, which vigorously attempt to wake up and activate the slumbering conscience of the viewers by making them witness the human frailties and the existing ills of the society which have deprived them of peace and happiness. Though dazed, the audiences begin to perceive their own inhuman attitude and the watchers’ sufferings are greater and more intense than the living sufferers on the stage and his compelling plays offer no escape. This shocking and shaking dramatic experience flashes upon the inward eye of his on-lookers, and urges them to ruminate over devices to transform the ruthless world into a congenial abode which in turn will prompt to cleanse themselves ultimately resulting in the metamorphosis of man, the social animal into a real human. Tendulkar, who worked incessantly aspiring to actualize the freedom for all, at the end of his every bewitching performance on the stage, optimistically looked for the “crooked be made straight and the curse be ended” which would lead to the moral well being of humanity. It is in this abiding concern for human upliftment that the real mystique of Tendulkar’s theatre prevails.

The present study is a humble attempt. It has brought out only the tip of an iceberg. There is inexhaustible scope for future research scholars to explore into the plays of Vijay Tendulkar. The women in his plays can be analyzed from feminist perspective. They may also be studied as “Shakthi” or “Saviours” or in comparison with Ibsen’s women. By probing into the psyche of his men, they may be established as ‘misfits’ or as ‘aberrations of humanity’. Tendulkar’s exploration into the untrodden realms of a mentally deranged person in The Cyclist and his awesome revelations of the nether world in His Fifth Woman await bold explorers. A comparative study of his Ghashiram Kotwal and Wole Soyinka’s Lion and the Jewel with regard to their form, cultural context, and characters will surely yield a very rich harvest. His Arun in Kanyadaan and Osborne’s Jimmy in Look Back in Anger will go
hand in hand as angry young men. His techniques also offer infinite scope for academic and research pursuits. A study pertaining to the salient features of a musical dance drama can be ventured by comparing the plays of Tendulkar and Vikram Seth.

Tendulkar’s plays proffer the efficacy of love and compassion as the panacea to the moral decline in social life. His propensity for theatrical exuberance widens one’s knowledge of expression, philosophy, psychology, history, and fine arts. His plays represent a new awakening in Indian theatre and his theatrical experiments hold promises to the upcoming dramatists, the active performers, the bold producers, the creative designers with their innovative technical crew, and theatre aesthetes who may contribute to the fecundity of the Indian Drama. In accordance with the unfailing law of life, nature brought the curtain down on Tendulkar’s life on 19th May 2008, but as he himself had stated that he wrote for life and to be alive, this dramatist-activist, with the wonderful mystique of his ever provocative theatre, will be perpetually alive making a tremendous appeal on the minds of the lovers of life.