LATENT TENDENCIES
CHAPTER - II

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Civilization is hooped together, brought
Under a rule, under the semblance of peace
By manifold illusion; but man's life is thought,
And he, despite his terror, cannot cease . . .
Ravening, raging and uprooting that may come
Into the desolation of reality: (Yeats 149)

Vijay Tendulkar, one of the most celebrated avant-garde Indian playwrights, has permitted his observant self to delve deep into the inner and intricate workings of the mind of the most complicated creature of nature namely human being and has depicted in his plays the real facts deducted in all its originality and variety without exaggerating or simplifying them. His “creative genius, sharpened by his keen observation and seasoned by his journalistic experience, has found explosive expression in his powerful plays which sensitize the reader-audience to the domestic-socio-political tensions in the Indian Milieu” (Dharan 93). His exploration into the human psyche results in a “ruthless dissection of human nature revealing its inherent tendencies to violence, avarice, selfishness, sensuality, and sheer wickedness” (Tendulkar xii). As a dramatist, his endeavour is not to paint ‘superficial conflicts in gaudy colours’ but to present the ‘egotistic tensions’, effectively in ‘pastel shades’. He can “rejoice in the beauty and nobility in the world but can not be blind to the ugly and ignoble in it” (Pandey 22).

Vijay Tendulkar can be grouped among the ‘angry young men’, because, in most of his dramas, he has vividly delineated his sense of agitation and anger against the existing system. For a sensitive and sensible person like Vijay Tendulkar, the “present day socio-political and religio-cultural system with its obvious contradictions, hypocrisies, corruption, atrocities and its ostrich-like denial of the same, the hollowness of its claims and promises and its sham
concern for values” (Agnihotri 29) offer a vast and varied harvest of themes to write on. Vijay Tendulkar through his plays challenges the validity and relevance of certain values by exposing the ugliness of a system, like patriarchy, that dehumanizes and tramples on human dignity and also by effectively voicing the inarticulate urges of the common man.

It has been insisted all around the world that only values — moral, social, political, and personal — impart significance to life and meaning to death. Without values, life becomes merely a series of meaningless events and death a shattering experience. India, meant for its moral codes and spiritual values, ever sustains its unique place amidst the other countries and the world looks up to India as the ‘world monopolist’ not because of her material wealth, military strength, manpower, or literature but because of her great ‘science of living’. However, even India cannot escape but submit herself to the scrutiny of time.

Few most important social events have left their indelible scar on the people resulting in a sharp change in their attitude of life. For example, the shift of power, the influence of an alien culture, and the demands of the society have led humanity to a mad rat race resulting in dehumanization and decadence. Vijay Tendulkar, instead of glorifying the best aspects of Indian life and society, chooses to focus his creative genius on its bitter and neglected aspects. In his plays, he deals with gender inequality, social inequality, power games, self-alienation, oppression, exploitation, mental agonies, suffocations, sex, and violence which are the tragic consequences mostly due to the confrontations of egos in different human relations. Freud describes human civilization as a “universal neurosis” and Nietzsche’s exclamation is “that disease called man”. Tendulkar’s portrayal of life and personages in his plays ascertains Freud’s and Nietzsche’s observations. It would really be a dreadful shock to realize that life continues among such eccentrics. A powerful play should affect, for a playwright has the power not only to challenge but also to change. Tendulkar’s powerful depiction does induce his audience to muse on the prevalent woes and to contemplate on possible measures to set life right.
In most of Vijay Tendulkar’s plays, three vital issues that are highly persistent in every society, are projected in all its brutality, gruesomeness, and viciousness. They are the issues of gender, power, and violence. God, the greatest architect, has created man and woman, not to compete or fight with each other, but to be a complement to each other in order to be successful during their mission on this earth. But multifarious factors like disappointment, dishonesty, and ego proffer to disharmony ultimately resulting in their chauvinism and bestial existence.

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Power display naturally takes its course on oppression, exploitation, and deprivation. Power, especially in the hands of a tyrant, will result in inconceivable and inexplicable consequences making every day existence a horrifying and terrifying experience. It does not remain contented by oppressing and suppressing but derives a brutal pleasure by persecuting its dependents in the most barbarous manner.

Violence, another predominant phenomenon, is the other gigantic but ugly monster, which exercises its supremacy in various forms on its utterly helpless subordinates. The alienation between values and conduct prompts people to concede and resort to various manipulations in order to maintain some sort of balance in life. Violence is an innate, inherent, and inevitable feature of life. Tendulkar has never dreamt of undermining its devastating effect by soft-peddling on this issue. He confesses, “I did not simplify the matters and issues for the audience while presenting my plays. Sometimes my plays jolted the society and I was punished. I faced this manfully but never regretted my creation” (Collected Plays 598). It is undeniable that most of his plays did stir a hornet’s nest when they were staged.

The gender disparity, power as well as foul play, and gratuitous violence dominate the entire action in plays like Silence! The Court is in Session, Sakharam Binder, Kamala, The Vultures, Ghashiram Kotwal, Encounter in Umbagland, A Friend’s Story and Kanyadaan.

Every living creature has been specially designed with a specific motto enabling it to live, nurture, and adapt based on the environment in which it is destined to live. Human being, the
so called noblest creation gifted with the sixth sense - rationality, has a division in its sect based on gender. The difference in the physical structure and mental frame between a man and a woman has its own valid purpose. Hogie Wyckoff, a Transactional Analyst, explains, “As women and men we are socialized to develop certain parts of personalities while suppressing development of other parts. This programming promotes a predetermined, stilted, and repetitive way of acting life” (Steiner 196). So, it becomes evident that each gender has its own vital and fundamental tasks to execute with the help, support, and assistance of the other. But in their anxiety to impress or insult each other, they become uncivilized and crude in their thought, word, and deed ultimately culminating in dominance, oppression, and exploitation.

Gender conscience, from feminine perspectives, has been evolving in India, which was actually submerged in the freedom struggle for a long time. In that phase, women in India aspired to breathe liberation in the chains of tradition without closely questioning the patriarchal dispensation. Though some of them bear the marks of ‘new women’, Tendulkar has placed them “along the middle path of enlightened conformity to tradition” (Prasad 19). Vijay Tendulkar, in many of his plays, has championed women’s issues and projected their helpless suppression and oppression. On enquiry, his sharp reaction is, “I lack the desensitized attitude of many men. Also the state of women-conditions that existed when I was a boy affected me deeply. [...] The women in my life had to fight for basic things. [...] I saw my sister and mother as victims — one in marriage, one outside” (Patel 68). Hence, sufferance is the badge of the women portrayed by him.

Tendulkar’s first most significant contribution to Marathi theatre, Silence! The Court is in Session, is full of ‘scathing sarcasm’ about the male chauvinistic oppression. It expresses the endeavours undertaken by The Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association — a drama troop, to enact by way of acquainting, entertaining, and enlightening the inmates of a village regarding the court proceedings through their ‘Mock Trial of President Johnson’. The performers are from various walks of life. It includes Benare — a school teacher, Sukhatme —
an advocate, Mr. Kashikar — The Chairman, Mrs. Kashikar, Mr. Balu Rokde — a student, Ponkshi — a scientist, and Samant, the innocent villager. Prof. Damle’s absence is easily managed since Sukhatme, like Shakespeare’s Bottom in *A Midsummer Nights’ Dream*, has volunteered to enact both the roles of prosecution and defense counsel himself. But the absence of Rawte, who has to play the role of a witness, causes a slight discomfiture. They finally solve the issue by assigning the task to Raghu Samant, the local villager. His plea of ignorance regarding the customs of the court, throws them the much awaited opportunity. They create an illusion of the visual reality of a court in order to initiate Samant into the intricacies of a legal scene. Under the simple guise of a mock trial, their well-hatched conspiracy is very tactfully, efficiently, and adroitly carried out as a spontaneous happening. They opt for Benare to be the accused and as highly responsible citizens undertake the most crucial and significant social issue namely ‘infanticide’. In the course of the action, by the effective implementation of their hidden plan, they begin to unfold one after the other the crimes of Benare, unfurling her private affairs into public gaze which results in the revelation of the naked truth that is her pregnancy due to her illicit affair with Professor Damle. They watch the trapped, hunted, and dissected woman with a malicious glee and express a spurious excuse stating it as only a game, nothing but a game. The play ends exposing the co-actors’ hypocrisy and discourteousness which change Benare from being a sprightly, agile, and vivacious person to a dumbstruck, tormented, and helpless victim.

Though two women are depicted in *Silence!* the play rivets its attention on Leela Benare, the school teacher. A teacher is said to be a ‘transmitter, messenger and a carrier’. She believes and asserts that she keeps up to those notions and remains a dedicated teacher who has worn herself to a ‘shadow’ and is ever ready to give the last drop of blood to teach her students. This job provides her economic independence, internal confidence, and great peace of mind. Her clean record in her service has, in fact, induced great jealousy in the minds of her colleagues and the management.
Benare's playful attitude and boundless enthusiasm, her sharp wit and subtle comments, and her pertinacity and brashness amuse, astound, and annoy her co-actors. The 'truculence' and 'outsmarting eloquence' of this 'maverick woman' ascertain her intellectual superiority over others. An educated, independent, and a career woman outwitting the men cannot be brushed aside and the men, adept at carrying out their foul play, unmindful of her remonstration, catch hold of her and she is subjected as a convict in the chauvinistic court of law. In their brutal attempt to snub and subdue her, they have made effective use of Mrs. Kashikar, the only other woman in the scene. Every bit of Benare's present critical situation is quite well known to all but they put their heads together not merely to frame a full picture from the fragments but the thrill of watching a woman in the dock prompts their plan into action. The malignant purpose, behind the mock trial with infanticide as the issue, becomes self-evident, when Sukhatme acknowledges, "when there's a woman in the dock, the case does have a different complexion, that's true" (Silence! 73). Since one man's food is another man's poison, by butchering the scapegoat – Benare, they enjoy a sumptuous feast in the form of the excitement experienced satisfying their ravenous appetite.

The middle class moral system considers an unwed mother a canker in the society and her act as a heinous blot on the sacred brow of motherhood. Benare's adaptation of "flirtations posture has got explanation in her inveterate belief that maternity outside wedlock is deemed abysmal from the social standpoint and that it can be legitimized only by trapping a man in the bond of espousal, irrespective of his low brownness and crudity" (Pathak 12). Benare, hence, earnestly tries to marry a man not to safeguard her from strong condemnation, but to rescue her son from painful humiliation by offering a father to call his own.

To quote again from Dr. Pathak and Hemang Desai, "What rouses Benare to beg for alms of marriage . . . is not actually concupiscence or footloose waywardness but her motherly sensitivity and her anxiety for the well being of her offspring, her consciousness that a little lisping bud born of unlawful maternity would never be conceded effervescence in the garden of insensate rocks" (12). But neither the men who are worse than inconsiderate hunters, nor
Mrs. Kashiker, the Hand-that Rocks the cradle, but with no cradle to rock, can comprehend the instincts of the so called ‘independent’ woman. She madly searches hither and thither to depend completely on anyone on whose shoulders she can rest her head in peace but in vain and the result is, “between the conception and the creation, between the emotion and the response falls the shadow” (Eliot 159).

The greatest bolt from the blue is the decision of the management to remove her from the school premises- her sole means of life sustenance. Despite her pitiable plight, instable position, and the clear awareness that “life is something that’s nothing or a nothing that’s something” (116) and that in life only body is important, she has never intended to misguide or spoil the young and innocent brats with her notions. The cry of an anguished soul not about its own welfare but that of her wards is poignantly put forth in her monologue. She cries, “I did not teach any of this to those tender, young souls. I swallowed that poison, but didn’t even let a drop of it touch them! I taught them beauty. I taught them purity. I cried inside, and I made them laugh. I was cracking with despair, and I taught them hope” (117). Her efforts to set right her life are mocked at by the masochists and their verdict is “Criminals and sinners should know their place” (119). The future of posterity has been entrusted to her, whose conduct is a dreadful thing, which would dynamite the very roots of Indian tradition, culture, and religion. They determine not to allow any vintage of her sin to remain and decree the destruction of the foetus.

From the moment she is trapped, with their eyes glued on her, her co-actors watch with rancorous delight her afflictions and helplessness. Dissecting Benare in the most gruesome and ruthless manner, their attempt to hush up the prick of their conscience (if any) and their unctuous nature are adroitly revealed when they remark, “She’s taking it much too much to heart. After all it was. [...] Just a game! What else? A game! That’s all! [...] A mere game!” (120). The ugliness detected in the human psyche is indeed undoubtedly awesome. These men have meddled too far into the personal affairs of a defenceless woman unmindful of leaving an indelible scar simply because she does not have anyone to come to her rescue.
Mrs. Khashikar, the other woman character in the play, undergoes constant subjugation in the hands of her lord, and her life is sans freedom of thought, word, or deed. Benare’s observation, that Mr. Khashikar buys garlands for Mrs. Kashikar and she buys readymade bush shirts for Mr. Kashikar, is an indication that they lead a happy family life, yet the upper handedness and male chauvinistic attitude are apparently visible from the way he talks with and subdues his wife. One instance is when they propose to have a different prisoner for the mock trial.

MRS. KASHIKAR. Shall I do it? I will if you like.

KASHIKAR. No! (Mrs. Kashikar falls silent) She can’t get among a few people without wanting to show off! Shows off all the time!

MRS. KASHIKAR. (quite put out), Enough I won’t do it! Satisfied? (She is thoroughly disheartened). (72-73)
The difference between the plights of an unwed and married woman is that any person can hunt and haunt from all directions the former, whereas the legally wedded spouse is the most privileged one to dissect the latter.

As creation is limitless and here is God’s plenty, the various issues also adopt infinite ways and means to exhibit and establish themselves. Tendulkar’s plays are especially significant for their realistic presentation of neglected subjects, untouched problems, and outspoken dialogues. When his play, Sakharam Binder was staged, it enjoyed a ‘success de scandale’ for the denudation of hypocrisy, jealousy, masochism, and lust of the middle class male.

Tendulkar has created an unusual man with eccentric and extreme notions regarding life and values. He never permits any shackles or boons to bind him. This ‘coarse but impressive personality’ is a self alienated man, who looks for destitutes or widows, brings them home and allows them to live with him on certain strict norms and codes. He proclaims loudly that in his house he is the master and his words (only) go there. Sakharam
asserts his supremacy and authority (Figure 1) by trumpeting thus: “It’s Sakharam Binder’s house. [. . .] No free and easy ways here, see? I’m hot-headed when I lose my temper; I beat the life out of people. I’ve a foul mouth. [. . .] I like everything in order here. Won’t put up with slipshod ways. If you’re careless, I’ll show you the door. Don’t ask for any pity then. I’m the master here” (126).

In the beginning of the play, only Sakharam’s voice roars like that of a lion and his thunderous voice simultaneously create great fear and arouse excitement and curiosity. He admits that he is a womanizer, drunkard, and terror but has never done a dishonest act in his life. He is annoyed with the deserted women he brought home, for they worship their ungrateful husbands as their lords. He is highly contended with the present arrangement of ‘contractual co-habitation’ where there is no sentimental, moral, or legal binding between the two. Things are fine the way they are because one gets everything he wants and yet he is not tied down. He condemns the husbands strongly as, “They’re an impotent lot! For them the woman’s just dirt, that’s all. Beat her, kick her every single minute of the day [. . .]. We’re a whole lot better than those swine!” (129).

But in reality, Sakharam is worse than the real husbands for he hits the nail on the head without ever beating around the bush. He circumscribes limitation, as is shown doing in figure 2, by haranguing the new entrant Laxmi thus: “If someone calls, you’re not supposed to look up and talk. If it’s a stranger you’ll have to cover your head and answer him briefly. That’s all. And if I’m not around, don’t admit anyone into the house” (126). A single statement uttered by this philanderer, that is “Ganja is like a whore” (130) is sufficient to measure his deep rooted perversity, callousness, and soullessness in his nature.

Sakharam prides in being a self made man and pats himself for entertaining and upholding peculiar notions regarding life. He has no apprehension regarding supernatural power too. Though born in a ‘Brahmin family’ he conducts himself as a “Mahar, a dirty scavenger” (127). While the foremost duties of a brahmin are to serve, love, purify,
meditate, and realize Truth, this man refuses to identify and refutes his identity with Brahmins.

Taittiriya Upanisad instructs people, "Never swerve from your duties towards Gods and towards the departed 'souls'. May the mother be, to thee, a God. May the father be, to thee, a God. [. . .] Do only actions which are blameless. Always show reverence to the great" (94).

But Sakahram, 'the confused hedonist' avows that he is not scared of God. He asserts that the body has its appetites and worship and prayer cannot satisfy the itch. Had Shakespeare dreamt of the possibility of such a person on the earth, he would not have exclaimed, "Wha piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form, in movin, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a God! The beauty of the world!" (Hamlet 99), since Sakharam is diametrically opposite to the ostentatious description.

In spite of Sakharam's constant strivings not to be attached with and bound by anything and to roam around as free as the wind, his suspicion is aroused when he hears Laxmi, the latest entrant laughing and conversing quite unusually in a jubilant and flamboyant manner with someone. He is utterly flabbergasted to know that she has been talking and playing with a black ant. Unable to appreciate her friendliness with sub human lives, he sneers, "Is this a house or a loony-bin?" (139). When the coals fall on her feet and burn them, he remains insensitive to her pain. His upper handedness on this hapless woman is at its worst when he forces her in the middle of the night to laugh failing which he will twist her burnt foot. She is subjected to continuous or regular beatings. After a year long struggle, there comes a breaking point when she can no more withstand his harassments. She confesses, "Hell must be a better place than this" (148). Laxmi, a demure but serious woman, exerts a strong moral influence on this 'self-alienated psychopath'. He also senses that she will change him into a different person and declares, "You are different. Still waters run deep, [. . .] they 're damned dangerous" (151). Sensing her influence on him he decides to liberate himself and
announces “You don’t owe me anything. I owe you nothing either. Let’s be free of each other” (151). That is the way of his world and he begins to ruminate on the next ‘bird’.

The next woman is Champa. From the moment she has made her entry, Sakharam is lured by her physical charms. Her voluptuous, curvy, and seductive structure makes him wink at her seemingly insolent, audacious, and brash behaviour. While Laxmi is chucked out of her original home due to her barrenness, Champa deserts her husband as he is a sadomasochist. Her manners, language, and attitude resemble exactly Sakharam’s. She seems to be his alter-ego but not as haughty and discourteous as her male counterpart is. At one moment, she unleashes springs of thrashings at her husband and at another moment she extends a helping and protective hand to Laxmi. Till the re-entry of Laxmi, Sakharam’s world, in his own words, “From now on, is going to be Champa, Champa and nothing more. Nothing else. Nobody can match her little finger” (173). His confession that he grew up like a cactus-out in the open brings to one’s mind at once T.S. Eliot’s world of the hollow men, and perhaps in a way foreshadowing his doom.

Sakharam’s over indulgence with Champa and sexual demands are indicators of deeper psychological needs. But from the moment, Laxmi has made her re-entry, everything turns topsy-turvy and he cannot be the same. Sensing Laxmi’s impact on Sakharam, Champa infuriates him pointing out, “She’s made an impotent ninny of you. [. . .] you turn into a corpse-a worm!” (193). This causes the intended virulent effect and he lets loose hell because his motive in kicking out Laxmi is polluted by ideas of cruelty, hatred, and helplessness. With the strength of a cornered animal, Laxmi throws out her trump card disclosing Champa’s affair with Dawood. Sakharam, who has been rejoicing in his licentiousness all these days, is unable to cope with the painful revelation. He neither exclaims like Hamlet, “Frailty, thy name is woman!” (63) nor struggles with his impotent fury. Being a man of brutal action, like Othello, he is prompted by anger and suspicion and strangles her to death but shudders to realize that it is no storm in a tea cup but a murder. The megalomaniac, who believed himself to be a saviour of destitutes, has to be mollified, protected, and sheltered by
his dependent Laxmi. She assuages him assuring safe existence so long as she is by his side because her virtues and faith in God will shield them from any upheaval.

In Sakharam thus a realistic portrayal of the gender disparity and its aftermath, mainly due to people’s search for a safe and secure abode and struggle for survival forcing them to assault as well be assaulted in acquiescence, is effectively achieved by the playwright. Irrespective of the controversial opinions, this play has brought to the limelight the sufferings that the dropouts of family and society undergo to stay alive and come to terms with life. Frank Thakurdas’ and Rajinder Paul’s opinion deserves due consideration. They observe, “Here indeed is a sample of the ‘slice of life’ of a section - the majority, alas - who everyone takes for granted and turns a blind complacent eye on their individual trials, sorrows, and sufferings and who look up to fate or fortune for succour or redemption” (55). They consider this play as a powerful demonstration of a disturbing problem of social pathology that requires earlier and immediate redress.

Sakharam has created a unique life style under the safest nomenclature contractual co-existence, which offers or expects no finer or nobler sentiments like mutual love, trust, or care – the ingredients essential for a happy life. His life is founded on sheer animalistic need. Hence, his association with the women and its tenure are illusory, dream like, and evanescent in nature. While the devices of Sakharam are quite indigestible, Tendulkar’s depiction of an ‘exceptional family’ in The Vultures is outrageous, distressing, and repulsive. Love, the four lettered magical word, when experienced and practised, has the power to tie and bring together people paving a way for harmony and ecstasy. Selfless love makes man become humane and charitable. Bacon declares, “Nuptial love maketh mankind; friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it” (Selby 24). The Vultures is about the story of men accursed or else of vultures cursed to live their lives as men, whose home is sans love, mercy, kindness, or charity. True to the characteristic feature of vultures, which greatly afflict their innocent preys unmindful of the pain inflicted and damage caused, the inmates of the house, passionately ruled by selfish designs, adopt only foul means and
pounce on each other while attempting to convert their cunning schemes into successful actions.

Hari Pitale, an old man exists with his daughter Manik, his two legitimate sons namely, Ramakant and Umakant, his daughter-in-law, Rama - wife of Ramakant, and his illegitimate son Rajininath. Only Rama and Rajininath are found to be endowed with traces of humane qualities. These members are unabashedly selfish in motives, bestial in behaviour, dastardly in nature, savagery in actions, and loathsome in language. In this ‘house of turbulence’ which is ruled by mutual distrust and hatred, every one is shrewd, cunning, treacherous, and immoral. The very root is rotten here, where “things fall apart. The centre cannot hold together – Mere anarchy is loosed upon” (Yeats 170). Genuine love is endowed with tremendous power to touch lives, bridge distances, heal rifts, and build bonds, but unfortunately it seems to cease its existence among these vultures.

Man's aspiring nature, insatiated of its desire among the 'frailties and inconsistencies of its world' without any genuine effort and adaptation of proper means, leads one to dehumanization and decadence. Macbeth dug his own grave not due to his vaulting ambition but due to his surrender to the evil ways and means. G. Wilson Knight in his “Macbeth and the Metaphysic of Evil”, proves that the most profound and mature vision of evil is exposed and exhibited in Macbeth. His observation that “Macbeth is a desolate and dark universe where all is befogged, baffled, and constricted by the evil because evil is not relative but absolute [and also] the murk and nightmare torment of a conscious hell is inherent in it” (Lodge 159-160) is absolutely applicable to The Vultures too.

In this play, every one is victimized due to their intrigues against each other. However Rama and Rajininath can be graded as victims of circumstances but others, despite their craftiness and effective execution of their plans, are unable to achieve the desired result. With regard to gender assault, Rama is mostly subjected to verbal attack and despite twenty two years of her married life, she is left with no freedom of speech or act. Though, the various woes of Rama are not directly enacted on the stage, Rajininath’s description about
the way, the members torture her, neglect her, and coldly despise her, enables one to envision her mute sufferings and tormented struggles.

Rama is a woman of very few words but turns out to be significantly eloquent when tries to articulate her suppressed thoughts. She, compared to a doe, is surcharged and suffused with the ‘milkness of humanity’. She is pious, meek, composed, co-operative, adjusting, kind, generous, and compassionate, a sharp contrast to Manik who is selfish, immoral, hysterical, cruel, shrewd, and crafty. Like her brothers, she too drinks and smokes very casually. Her sister-in-law Manik’s position is, in fact more pathetic, because neither her father nor her two brothers ever seem to be bothered about her predicament. Her profound knowledge about her brothers initiates her to be highly cautious and she distrusts everyone. She is in no way less devilish in her motives and designs than her male counterparts. The docile Rama happens to become often the target of her outbursts. This thirty five year old woman, with no custodian to cuddle her, is in constant hunt for one but in vain. Her brothers, devoid of mercy, pity, and a sense of shame, ridicule her incessant efforts thus: “Good Victim she’s spied out this time! Before this . . . that cycle-shop owner, the film company cameraman. And, in between, that stall keeper from the Market. Used to roam round town with him. On his motorbike. Arms round his waist!” (216).

The father and the brothers conveniently wink at their Manik’s immoral behaviour and are unwilling to undertake any responsibility to set right her path. Her recent affair with the Raja of Hondur is mocked at and severely criticized by them. Umakant, hysterical and impetuous, humiliates and dishonours his own sister by pulling the towel from her body making the behaviour of legendary Dhuchadhana in Mahabharata less nauseating. Having inherited their father’s vices, obscene language and evil ways become their order of life. Their spitefulness and acrimony is at its worst in the following situation.

UMAKANT. *(Mincing about like a woman, one finger on his cheek)* We don’t go for picnics with anyone . . .

RAMAKANT. Or stay the night with them, either!
UMAKANT. *(Picking up the bottle from the side-table).* Nor do we keep those pills in our purse.

MANIK. *(Snatching the bottle out of Umakant's hands).* You've been dipping into my purse you swine!

RAMAKANT. So? Is it only that Hondur fellow who's allowed to dip into things? Eh, brother? How's that?

MANIK. *(turning towards Ramakant and pushing at his face).* Worms'll rot your mouths, you bastards!. (215)

“If you all work together with love, harmony, kindness, and humility the work will sweep the world” predicts Sri Paramanhansa (34). But these vultures unite together only to conspire against others. All the three join to harass their father in order to make him 'cough out' the truth about the hidden hoard.

The two brothers, bent on making the best of any situation, consider the pregnancy of Manik a 'windfall' for they can squeeze a huge sum by blackmailing the Raja of Hondur. They break Manik's leg in order to force her stay at home and avoid her meeting the king, lest she should scheme against them. The unexpected and untimely death of the king is a terrible blow and in sheer frustration they give a vehement kick at Manik's abdomen to abort the foetus and thus avenge their defeat. Screaming terrifyingly Manick limps down with blood soiling her white sari, which is the most unforgettable gory scene that affects one's mind deeply. Manik, though has proved to be more tactful, skilful, and efficient than her brothers, is the miserable victim of their brutal deeds only because she is a woman. “In the absence of inward joy, man turns to evil” (Yogananda 6). So, Manik, who has suffered ineffable and inexorable miseries, attempts to render the same injustice to her sister-in-law. Her haunting presence with 'eyes like live coals', reminding one the haunting Eumenides in Eliot's *The Family Reunion*, makes Rama shudder with horror and terror. Rama begs and pleads her husband to be by her side to face the awesome Manik, but he turns down her request as a mere trifle. She like Harry in *The Family Reunion* feels that "it's not being alone
that is the horror but to be alone with the horror” (Eliot 87). Her inconsiderate husband’s expression is, “Imagine it’s a free cinema. And forget about it!” (248).

Though Ramakant mostly tries to impress his wife by projecting the castles he keeps building in the air, in reality he keeps her on the dark regarding the ill happenings in his business. Rama senses the change and like Michael and Susan in Wordsworth’s “Michael”, she expresses her eagerness and willingness to enjoy voluntary poverty and endless industry but is stoutly snubbed by her husband. Her earnest appeal is, “We’ll make a feast of crumbs. I’ll slave as hard as you want. Gladly. [. . .] Stop this murderous deceit. [. . .] Will you listen to me, for once? I won’t ever tell you to do anything again. I’ll stay just as I have till this day, Mouth shut, head bent (251). The chauvinist flatly refuses to turn a new leaf and sternly objects to be a henpecked husband.

Rama’s profound wish in life is to be a mother. She yearns to be one at any cost. Her deep rooted desire floods out thus: “The soil’s rich, it’s hungry. But the seed won’t take root. If the seed’s soaked in poison, if it’s weak, feeble, lifeless, devoid of virtue - then why blame the soil?” (241). Unfulfilled desire leads to frustration and she dents, “If there should be a raging thirst, and it should meet with a fast of harsh drought? Day after day? Month after month? [. . .] What’s to happen? [. . .] I, [. . .] in this living death of my wifehood - I commit sati every moment! I burn! I am consumed!” (242). Unable to withstand her pleadings and promptings, Rajininath yields because he has realized that the seed, the vital core that takes root is rotten. A curse has infected that. He ruminates, “Virtue and vice are for other people! For us on whom this terrible curse has fallen, there is nothing but this curse. [. . .] If you at least can escape that curse [. . .] If I can be used for that why should I say ‘no’? (243). While Eliot’s Harry in The Family Reunion comes forward to expiate the sin or curse, Rajininath wants Rama to escape. The outcome is, Rama’s “debilitating frustration seeks redemption on consummating the relationship with Rajininath” (Tendulkar li).

Ramakanth, despite all his negative traits, has an innate longing to have a kid of his own. All his efforts to thrive financially are to provide a luxurious and sophisticated life to his wife
and son. His bankruptcy and mortgage of the house do not stand on his way to do the needful for his expectant wife. Ramakant is ecstatic so long as he is blissfully ignorant about the origin of the seed. But when Umakant discloses the despicable truth, his world crumbles into pieces and no deus ex machina can save him. From that moment, he ravages like a mad elephant. His anguished mind bursts out, “The nether regions! I’m going to hell! Air of Hades! [...] I’m a useless fellow, brother. Son of a swine! I-I let my wife ... go ... go ...” (263). In mad frenzy, he swears, “I’ll finish off the bastard. Push him out of her belly. Tear him out” (264). Though no clear indication regarding the consequence is explicitly stated, Rajinath’s observation, “Instead, a huge and terrible wave / Towered towards the sky. / Came to that final, tender, feeble shoot. Tore, smashed, uprooted it. [...] / Left her a stark insanity of stone / Frozen from her tears / Empty of pain / And empty of desires” (206) speaks out the irrevocable loss. The Vultures projects the most gruesome and gory picture of the desolation of the modern world, the loss of purpose in and the absurdity of modern man’s life. The plight of these ‘lost violent souls’ perturbs Rajininath and despite the uncertainty about their fate he prays for hope and compassion.

While in The Vultures, the reign of the animalistic instincts is depicted in all its rawness and ruthlessness resulting in the fall and damnation of all, as in Poe’s The Fall of the House of Usher, in Kamala, another seminal contribution by Vijay Tendulkar, is projected a new perspective about the predicament of the modern man. Ramakant due to his inefficiency and insufficient involvement in his business, meets with a steep decline but Jaisingh Jadav, a committed news reporter, with his excessive indulgence in his profession, is constantly obsessed with exposing the inhuman activities happening anywhere around the country. With undaunted courage and unflinching faith in his own moral responsibility, he ventures new missions, unmindful of the risk involved in such exposures. He firmly believes that he is committed to the cause of championing the underdogs and for their emancipation.

This over enthusiastic investigative journalist with a sound conscience goes out of station without intimating Sarita, his smart educated better half, regarding his whereabouts, in order
to authenticate the existence of flesh trade, where women are used as commodities for sale. He buys a woman, Kamala, for only two hundred and fifty rupees and publicizes the sale through a Press Conference much to the amusement and amazement of all and sundry. The innocent question, put forth by the tribal woman to his educated wife, brings in a sea change in Sarita’s perspectives regarding him. While Jaisingh returns home in great joie de vivre since he has enjoyed everyone’s kudos, his proprietor Sheth Singhania, instead of appreciating his significant and rare accomplishment, decides to place him in jeopardy by dismissing him. His wife Sarita, with the newly dawned wisdom about her insignificant existence, becomes very pertinacious and decides to assert herself by extricating her dependence on her husband. A woman of clear insight, great perspicacity, and amazing resilience, watching her husband’s victimized state, she suppresses her present demand and caters to his existential angst by letting herself into his grief and earnestly attempts to assuage his ‘lost’ feeling.

Indian society till date is in general patriarchal in its system and conservative in its attitude regarding man-woman relationship. Sonali Jain’s following observation about Kamala brings out clearly the present status of women in India represented in microcosm. In Tendulkar’s plays, relationships are examined “in the context of a changing social, political, economic, and cultural milieu. Kamala discusses the asymmetrical unequal relations between women and men in the context of a nuclear family in which the women may be perfectly capable and intelligent but must not assert her independence” (Subramanyam 96).

In the beginning of the play, Sarita is found to be highly contended and dutiful. When her uncle, Kakasahab, who is greatly annoyed and perturbed by the threatening phone calls, expresses his disagreement with the ways of investigative journalism, Sarita with ‘fondness, pride, and adulation’ acclaims that Jaisingh, a proud promoter and conscientious ideal journalist, is crusading tirelessly to expose the corruption and exploitation existing in society. She meticulously carries out her husband’s instructions and never regrets but rejoices in doing so. When his arrival is hinted at, with all eagerness, expectation and care, she arranges
and keeps the home ready to receive him. Her uncle feels, “You may be highly educated, Sarita, but you are still a girl from the old Mohite wada!” (5). Sarita is initially focused not as vehemently fighting for her right or might, but as highly obliging and unassuming. But from the moment, the tribal woman has stepped in, like the entry of Satan into the serpent caused the loss of paradise, there emerges in Sarita, a spirit of rebellion and independence resulting in the sprouting of disharmony.

Jaisingh Jadav, due to his over exertion and excitement, turns insensitive and oblivious to the moods and expectations of others. He is authoritative and dictatorial and executes his wish on others unmindful of the other people's convenience or inconvenience. While he is craving for recognition and approval, he fails to recognize and approve others. His professional secrecy and achievement are of greater importance than the anxiety of his wife about his safety. He fails to trust his wife and with great reluctance, he answers her queries.

JAISINGH. Will you keep it to yourself? [. . . ] I bought her-- in the Luhardaga bazaar in Bihar. For two hundred and fifty rupees (Sarita is stunned).

Brightening as he notices her reaction).

SARITA. They auction - women?

JAISINGH. Yes, women. Can’t believe it, can you? The men who want to bid - handle the women to inspect them. Whether they are firm or flabby. Young or old. Healthy or diseased. How they feel in the breast, in their waist, in their thighs and ….

SARITA. Enough. (14)

For the first time, Sarita senses the trace of insensitivity regarding the sentiments of others in her husband. Her suspicion gets confirmed when he drives her to bring Kamala despite her illness. He pleads and cajoles Kamala to go with him in the evening to which she bluntly refuses citing her illness. With a hardened expression he orders her to obey him. When Sarita requests him to permit her to change her sari as it is torn, his reply is, “I know! You don’t have to tell me, understand?” (22). His brutality and callousness is well exhibited through his conversation with Jain, his friend, when they make a report about the press
conference. Sarita is pained to realize that her husband is a sensation seeker and does not truly aspire for the emancipation of the suffering humanity. She asks angrily, “So while they were asking her those terrible questions and making fun of her you just sat and watched, did you?” (30). Her uncle has made it occur on all of them that under the guise of dragging this criminal sale of human beings into the light of the day, Jaisingh has actually made Kamala not only a laughing stock but “sold a woman that poor and illiterate woman by doing so” (31). This blow hits where it hurts most and Jaisingh becomes furious at the revelation of the harsh truth.

While Sarita is fuming and fretting over the injustice done to a fellow woman, Jaisingh’s advances to make love, create in her a very strong sense of aversion. Kamala, unable to penetrate into the complexities of civilized life, puts forth, with immense hesitation a simple question “How much did he buy you for?”. Her reaction to Sarita’s answer is “It was an expensive bargain, memsahib. If you pay seven hundred and there are no children . . .” (34), which makes Sarita flabbergasted and she can not ignore Kamala’s solution as a fatuous one.

Jain’s comment, “Hero of anti-exploitation campaigns makes slave of wife! Bye, lovely bonded labourer” (17), has been taken by Sarita as a jovial remark. But Kamala’s words make them dawn on her that she is as worse as the slave Kamala, who is kept at home to cater to Jaisingh’s physical and emotional needs. She is accepted not for any of her special traits or talents but for her perfect acclimatization in his environment—personal, social and professional. His assertiveness and dictatorial attitude find further expression when he announces his decision to leave Kamala in a woman’s hostel much to the annoyance of both Kamala and Sarita.

Jaisingh has attached no importance in promoting Kamala’s life. He refuses even to think, what would become of her afterwards. He has bought Kamala, brought her home and once the need or the demand, here the press conference, is over, the bond is to be completely snipped oblivious of the devastating damage caused on the other. Kakasaheb makes an
accurate assessment stating “You see, Kamala is just a pawn in his game of chess”. Sarita is ashamed to acknowledge, “Not just Kamala, Kakasaheb. Me too . . . me too” (43).

The awakened soul is well aware of its own self and determines its course of action. When Jaisingh bids her to be ready to go for a party, she expresses her refusal citing ‘her will’ as the reason. When she indulges in a valid argument with Kakasaheb pondering over the upper handedness exhibited by men, she questions thus: “If a man becomes great, why doesn’t he stay a great man? Why does he become a master?” Kakasaheb replies, “Because he’s like that. That’s why he’s a man. [. . . ] It may be unpleasant, but it’s true. If the world is to go on, marriage must go on. And it will only go on like this” (47).

When Sarita determines not to be a slave any more, then breaks out the news of Jaisingh’s expulsion from his job, which makes him feel crestfallen. Kakasaheb points out the mistake men make, manhood makes, which helps Sarita to comprehend the riddle of life. Despite her earnest wish to assert her womanhood, the need of the hour is assertion of love and faith for the well being and sustenance of Jaisingh. Her humaneness has overpowered her woman consciousness and she does not take the momentous decision of Ibsen’s Nora but extends a comforting hand to Jaisingh. Vijay Tendulkar, through his Kamala, has revealed the hypocritical stands of the liberal minded men and the clash points between the choices claimed and those allowed to women with regard to their intellectual, emotional, and sexual commitments. The women in Kamala, namely the educated Sarita, the ignorant illiterate Kamala and the hardworking maid Kamalabai have their specific duties assigned and are expected to adhere to them. Though they are not subjected to physical harassment like the women in Tendulkar’s other plays, they are not recognized or honoured for their significant contribution in Jaisingh’s achievement either.

Though Sakharam has jolted the society with Sakharam’s pseudo ideals and prurience, and The Vultures has made the people shudder with its inmates’ inhuman conduct, it is Kanyadaan, which won the Saraswate Samman Award that has made a profound impact on anyone with a sound conscience because it gives “expression to a deep-rooted malaise and its
"pains". In Tendulkar's own words, "it is not the story of a victory. It is the admission of defeat and intellectual confusion" (598).

*Kanyadaan*, which means giving the hands of one's virgin daughter in marriage to someone, is about the upper caste young woman, Jyoti's firm and irrevocable decision to marry a budding Dalit writer, Arun Athavale and the unforeseen agonizing consequences. When the play commences, the reader/audience is in for a pleasant surprise for here is a family cherishing, nourishing, and practising within its nucleus the ideals advocated by Gandhi and other such noble hearts. The dwellers of this affectionate home are Yadunath Devlalikar, a humble, honest, generous, broad minded, straightforward, and trust worthy M.L.A, the father of Jyoti - the female protagonist, Seva - an active, prudent, and practical socialist, the mother, Jayaprakash, a devoted, dedicated, wise, and obedient post graduate student, the elder brother of Jyoti, and Jyoti - a principled but impetuous young daughter of Nath and Seva. "A house" opines Khalil Gibron, the Prophet, "shall not be a glistening film that covers a wound but an eyelid that guards the eye" (132).

True to the prophet's vision, Nath's home guards the interests of all its dwellers. It is neither patriarchal nor matriarchal where everyone is entitled to express and establish his/her notion. Any problem or issue put forth is allowed for general discussion and individual opinion and at the same time once the decision is pronounced, burying all their differences of opinion they extend their whole hearted co-operation for its successful completion. Nath, an ideal politician, aspires for universal brotherhood. He practises his principles and has reared both his children infusing in them the noblest thoughts. His unflinching faith in the innate godliness in every human being forbids him even to intend evilness to others. When Jyoti declares her decision to marry Arun, a dalit, his happiness knows no bound and is very proud of his daughter. She states that she is captivated not by his handsomeness but by his clear thoughts and fluent expression. Her judicious mother, with her far sightedness, advises her daughter to look for some kind of stability and compatibility because Arun is different in everyway and Jyoti may not be able to handle the situation.
The very first time when Arun is brought home to meet his prospective - in laws, his latent talent alone is not brought to the limelight but also his lurking fury against the elite upper class unmasking his discourteous and perverse nature. He feels, “men who sit and chat in the kitchen are pansies!” (17) and asserts that he is rude and that is his manner - a scavenger’s manner. He derives a wilful delight in offending the noble sentiments of Jyoti by brutally exhibiting his people’s pitiable conditions. He asks, “Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my father’s hut? Without vomiting?” (17).

During the first encounter, Seva, with the natural care and concern characteristic of a mother, enquires Arun regarding his commitments, obligations, and plans for his future. When she insists on the inevitability of a stable career, he replies maliciously.

No problem. We shall be brewing illicit liquor. [...] It is a first class profession for two persons. The man bribes the police and the wife serves customers. People call her aunty, the more striking the aunty’s looks, the brisker the trade ... (with determined obstinacy) it is fun for the man and wife. If there are children, there’s work for them also, to wash glasses and plates, to fetch paan and cigarettes. And very good income in the tips. Many hands to work, and so many chances to rake in money. (Arun is happy now seeing Seva's unrest). (517) Seva understands that he is a ‘misfit’ and warns Jyoti not to allow a wrong move spoil her life. His uncouth behaviour and venomous words do not prompt Jyoti to conclude that he is vile by nature. As a human being, he is a complex but potential person. He has intelligence, drive, and creativity, which, Jyoti believes, will enable them to lead a happy conjugal life. By being and becoming his catalyst, Jyoti can promote his life to laudable heights, for this unrefined gold needs one to melt and mould it in fine shape or design.

Arun’s experience of life is not like that of Jyoti - a bed of roses, but he has fallen upon the thorns of life and bled profusely. He mutters in agony, “It is hell, and I mean hell. A hell named life” (18). His power and ferocity are directed against his upper-caste wife. His entire suppressed and subdued wrath against the upper class bursts out through his verbal
stinging and inhuman physical assaults on his wife. In blind fury and bestiality, he kicks his pregnant wife unmindful of causing damage to his better half and offspring. The marriage, which is aimed at the harmonious blending of class disparity, has resulted in misery and disillusionment.

Jyoti, who is taught to fight bravely and not to withdraw deceptively, faces the battle trying to surmount the ordeals. The precious experiment is a miserable failure because Arun permits no change and becomes a parasite on Jyoti ultimately resulting in the perceptible transformation not in Arun but in Nath, from being an idealist to a disillusioned realist while his daughter crusades against her woes tirelessly. This play depicts very effectively the changes cultivated in a happy family due to the intrusion of an arrogant avenger. The immediate target of Arun's anger and atrocities is Jyoti. He confesses once, "when anyone throws a challenge, I lose all control" (515) and his tyrannical ways make life miserable to his complacent wife and her relatives. His being a dalit, male, and creative writer endows him with the might and strength which is utilized not to liberate his people from their miserable existence but to bring misery to the upper class at least at a narrow level by exercising his will on his wife, an innocent representative of the class.

While Kanyadaan exhibits the mute sufferings of an educated and committed woman in the hands of a pervert and heartless husband, the next play A Friend's Story reveals the indomitable will of an obstinate lesbian, Sumitra Dev, on her friend Bapu alias Shrikant Marathe and the humiliations, tortures, and helplessness experienced by him due to his ties with her, but ultimately Bapu's ruthless denial of friendship victimizes this dame sans mercy. As is usual with Tendulkar, who has never 'been squeamish about shocking his audience', in this play, brings to focus the cravings as well the plight of a lesbian. Says he, "Out of some compulsion which had no logic, it [the play] grew in spite of the near possibility of a play on a lesbian being staged, it got written . . . which, when staged was hated by the women and sneered at by the men" (Gokhale 51).
A friend in need is not just a friend indeed alone, but a saviour. A true friend is always a well wisher and unselfish, with whose help, support, and assistance any crisis can be surmounted. As Ruskin has distinguished books into books of the hour and of all times, friends can also be either passing clouds or a permanent heavenly body like the sun making life warm and bright. In this play, Bapu though pronounces himself as a ‘weakling’ and is despised by Mitra as a ‘worm’, ‘milksop’ and a ‘chicken heart’, it is his generosity and spontaneous tendency to redress her afflictions that make her confide in him all her hither to concealed shameful attempts to realize her true nature.

Bapu unfolds the reasons for her instantaneous appeal among students. Her masculine vigour in stride and speech, her penetrating glance right into other’s eyes, her broad forehead suggesting intelligence, her carefree laughter in loud bursts and her personality with its natural, aggressive masculinity make her figure irresistibly attractive to men. Mitra herself says, “I was always with boys. Used to play all their games, from marbles to gillidanda. Even kabaddi. It was great fun” (422). But as she grows up she is confronted with unanswerable questions. Her awful realization that she is a frigid drives her to commit suicide but survives due to the timely attention and action of her parents. She confesses all her secrets to Bapu, who is petrified and dazed. He never knows anything about such problems but feels it is ‘bizarre, repulsive and abhorrent’.

Mitra’s remarkable resilience is revealed when she consents to enact a masculine role in the play and has created an upsurge due to her perfect performance. This impersonation leads to an awesome revelation. She pours out her mind and confesses, “That night, while the love scene was on, things came to a head. [...] Her touch ... her very desirable body in my arms [...]. That night, I saw myself in a flash of lightening. I know I didn’t want a man. I need a woman. I’m different” (440). Consequently she falls head over heels in love with Nama, the girl who enacted the role of the heroine in the play.

Sensing Bapu’s trustworthiness and generosity, she begins to assert her will not only on Nama but on Bapu too, by pestering and pressurizing him to let her use his room. The weak
willed Bapu, despite his ‘niggling feeling’ that he is doing something wrong, succumbs to her preposterous demands by managing to send out Pande, his room-mate, from the venue during the stipulated hour. From then onwards Mitra begins to trespass on Bapu, unmindful of his predicament. Pande, on the other side, has lost himself to Mitra seeing her magnificent performance on the stage and pines for her love seeking Bapu’s aid in his endeavour. Bapu becomes tremulous and is in a fix not knowing how to extricate from the embarrassing situation. Dalvi, lover of Nama, is perplexed for the ‘course of true love never did run smooth’ and the hardship projects from an unexpected corner. Mitra, on the other hand, asserts, that she will neither let Nama off nor rest till she gets her. “Life is a resolution that accompanies youth, and a diligence that follows maturity, and a wisdom that pursues senility” (Gibran 568). Mitra, being a reckless youth, resolves to get Nama by any means, fair or foul, because love has no other desire but to ‘fulfil itself’. These disclosures of Mitra both haunt and panic Bapu on the one side and Pande’s yearnings and remonstrations cause him great discomfiture on the other side.

Dalvi’s furious accusation and foul denunciation citing the anonymous letters delivered to Nama with Bapu’s handwriting not only add salt to his wounds but ends in physical assault and public humiliation. Much of his pain is self chosen and he remains baffled not knowing how to wriggle out. Bapu’s plight becomes worst and highly complicated when Dalvi entreats him to spare his room for the same purpose sought for by Mitra. With great reluctance, he discloses his decision to shift his room which spurs Mitra say cynically “I’m not so weak that any worm can hurt me. I have lived with death” (465). At one moment she torments him calling him “You are a worm ... I should have picked you up with a stick and flung you out” (467) and another moment she begs for money for reasons apparently known but unpronounced.

“Pleasure is a freedom song but it is not freedom. It is the blossoming of your desires but it is not their fruit” (Gibron 64). Mitra’s unreasonable and unnatural blind love for Nama forbids her from realizing this. Temptations - right or wrong, no matter how strong, can be
counteracted and nullified by right discrimination and will power. But Mitra, like a predator with its mind and eyes glued on the prey, stands firm in her resolution and brings Nama under her thumb. The indecisive Nama dangles between the two powerful currents, Mitra and Dalvi, and becomes a prey to their whims and fancies.

Despite Bapu’s earnest wish to disentangle himself, when Nama unfolds her fear about Mitra’s possessiveness and crude expectations, he, filled with full of the milk of human kindness, entangles himself again. Nama’s disclosure about her marriage in Calcutta makes him ill at ease and prompted by loyalty to Mitra he goes to her because “when the heart becomes congested with secrets . . . and the ribs are about to burst with the growing of the heart’s confinement, one cannot find expression for such a labyrinth except by a surge of release.” (Gibran 559). Divulging Nama’s departure, he strives to make it dawn on Mitra that she is the originator and perpetrator of all her miseries and must try to rid herself of them as expeditiously as possible because if she resolves to change then everything can change and assures to be her moral support till she overcomes the ordeal. But Mitra’s pursuit forces her to brush him aside and Bapu cannot endure her any further. All these days, he has been immensely helping her even beyond his limits, patiently enduring her gibes and taunts. While he has been extending his help with no vested interest, she keeps bullying him and at last has fooled him. It is a painful realization that he is only a door mat to be used at need and kicked aside when not needed and determines not to remain one and makes clean break with her.

While Mitra’s love for Nama has crowned her with delight, her dependence on Bapu has crucified her. She manages to withstand her disappointment in love but crumbles to pieces when disillusioned in her friendship. Sensing Bapu’s soft nature and soft corner for Mitra, Dalvi torments him exposing his resolve to make life a hell for her. Bapu is further tortured to see Mitra boozing in the Military club and raving at herself thus: “Friendship is over, he said. [. . .] I lied to my mother, but not to him. You know that? Told him what I didn’t tell any one. He - he was my mother. Mother - Bapu. Gone. Friendship is over” (492). This incident leaves him dazed and dumbstruck letting loose hell. His mind, over powered with
her thoughts, doubts if she is really a will-o’-the-wisp and struggles to overcome the sense of remorse. Her suicide, this time materialized, makes him crestfallen and staggered. She constantly annoys and haunts his memory not only during her lifetime but after her death too, leaving him desolated and heart broken. This is how a sensitive man’s sentiments are put to severe castigation by a self-willed woman in *A Friend’s Story*, her indomitable will eventually leading her to her grave.

Right from the day of Eve’s creation, women are considered subservient to men and are expected to cater to the needs of the patriarchal society. Whether in autocracy or democracy, the treatment meted out by women remain the same. *Ghashiram*, the most celebrated dance drama of Vijay Tendulkar, depicts the attainment of the powerful Kotwalship [Chief Police Officer] of Pune by Ghashiram Savaldas at the cost of his daughter’s honour. In a general ambience of surging violence, the autocratic and tyrannical ways of the Kotwal and the immorality, profanity, and sneaky ways of the Brahmins of Pune are picturesquely portrayed.

In the other plays of Vijay Tendulkar, the women protagonists are at least endowed with their individual traits and identities but in *Ghashiram*, Lalita Gawri, who is proclaimed as a piece of his heart by Ghashiram, though is the kingpin in promoting an unknown Savaldas to a lionized Kotwal, has not been assigned with any importance in the action of the play. She is literally a voiceless and marginalized creature, not even a creature, but a thing pandered to and bartered by her father to Nana, the philanderer.

Ghashiram Savaldas, a brahmin from Kanauj, goes to Pune in search of his fortune where he is consistently harassed and humiliated in public. When it goes beyond his power of endurance, it transforms “from humiliation to revenge in assertion, to eventual victimization” (Bandyapadhyay 587). Sensing Nana Phadnavis’ libido, baiting his graceful daughter Gauri, he attains Kotwalship and brings Pune under his thumb. Though the entire Pune is under his scrutiny and constant vigilance, ironically he is ignorant about his dear daughter’s death. Her death has not only saddened him but infuriated him ultimately ending in his more barbaric
and inhumane treatment of the people. His demonic ways lead to a violent upsurge from the mob demanding immediate redress in the form of his death.

Ghashiram, when introduced, is very meek, submissive, and even servile. Later when severely castigated, in painful humiliation, he regrets “I came here to find my fortune - and lost my reputation” (375) and with pent-up and impotent but burning fury, he swears, “Your good days are gone! [...] Now I am a devil. You’ve made me animal; I’ll be a devil inside. I’ll come back like a boar and I’ll stay as a devil. I’ll make pigs of all of you. I’ll make this Poona a kingdom of pigs” (376-77). He observes Nana’s ogling at Lalita Gauri and usurps the golden opportunity to earn prominence with Nana. Nana’s lust adores her graceful image and openly discloses his insatiable desire to possess only her tender physique.

The unscrupulous opportunist Ghashiram seizes the occasion by inducing Nana, saying “if the hunter is ready, the prey will be found” (379). Nana’s lecherousness envisions and he exclaims, “How beautifully formed! What a lovely figure! Did you see? Erect! Young! Tender! Ah! Ho ho!” (379). Blood is said to be thicker than water but ambition and revenge are more predominant than affection to Ghashiram. That is why, when his daughter’s anatomy is analyzed by Nana, he turns a deaf ear with his mind bent on achieving the desired result. Nana cries in anguish, “If she is found, than this Nine Court Nana will conquer Hindustan! What a bosom! Buds just blossoming . . . we’ll squeeze them like this!” (380). Ghashiram watches ‘the old over ripe Nana eating her like a peach’ and laments “I’ve given my beloved daughter into the jaws of that wolf! [...] the child of his heart up for sale” (381), yet resolves to make the deal lucrative by demanding Kotwalship in exchange for his daughter. Nana accuses, “Bastard, you’ve got me in a narrow pass” to which the father’s shameless acknowledgement is, “Yes, the narrow pass of my only daughter” (384).

Turning impervious to criticism and becoming inconsiderate about the feelings, emotions, and expectations of Gauri, both Nana and Ghashiram have used her as the most powerful pawn in their game. Their prime concerns are the gratifications of power to one and lust to other. Though Gauri is the central character of the text and “all the action impinges on
Gauri’s sexuality, her desirableness and objectification” (Subramanyam 113), but for the few sentences uttered by her, she is never brought to the limelight. Her presence, her liaison with Nana, her absence, and her death - all these are determined based on the needs and requirements of the two men involved with her. For one, she is an object of inexhaustible pleasure and for the other, the sole prop to ascend and attain the target.

The promiscuous man’s arrangements to marry “A tender blossoming bride, . . . A just - this year ripened bride” (401) whom he has bought by giving three hundred gold coins, hints at the miserable fate of Gauri. Immediately after issuing orders to the soldiers to throw Gauri’s corpse into the river, Nana makes advances to his new bride, which exposes his heartlessness. The roaring Ghishiram is easily intimidated by the all powerful Nana. The suppressed anger floods out in many atrocious ways developing in Ghishiram a ‘thirst for human blood’. Nana realizes that “he was no use any more” (413) and grants his people the right to savagely assault and assassinate him.

In this play, all the women are expected to live on a par with their men’s whims and fancies. Gauri’s pathetic plight and cruel end, exhibit beyond doubt not only her servitude but that of all women in the play. Nana’s wives, like those of Baroka’s in Soyinka’s Lion and the Jewel, have to live in acquiescence with his licentious ways and should rejoice in his merry. The wives of the Brahmins are destined to live in solitary confinement at home while their husbands’ erotic desires are gratified in Bavannakhani. A woman seeking Nana’s permission to bury her dead father is sneered at and becomes a hapless victim.

This world is most befitting to such women like Gulabi, the courtesan, and others that enjoy with their Maratha lovers, for they dance to Nana’s tunes by living in accordance with his licentiousness. Worse than Kamala in Kamala, is Gauri’s position, for here she is sold by her father despite his being aware of the heinousness. These women are mere marionettes in the hands of their male puppeteers, who are silenced and marginalized both in the play and on the stage by permitting their presence in accordance with the male member’s necessities.
While the prominence of women, despite their inevitability is clouded in Ghashiram, a strikingly contrast picture is offered in Encounter. Vijaya, the legal heir to King Vichitravirya, is considered a dipstick by her own father. Due to the unexpected demise of the king, in order to avoid creating a pandemonium, the ‘wise’ ministers offer her the throne expecting and believing that she would accommodate herself to their plans. But, much to their dismay, she thwarts all their plans with subtle diplomacy and emerges out successful leaving them baffled and crestfallen.

Vijaya of Tendulkar’s Encounter is a princess, who is regarded by King Vichitravirya, her father, as “half-witted, little-childish and in understanding a complete nought” (281). She is taken to be playful who is unaware and ignorant of the complexities of palace life. When she is introduced to the audience, they could judge Vijaya to be not a stupid but a shrewd and an obstinate girl longing for freedom. Her concern to set free a pigeon and her admiration of its pure white colour express her humane and aesthetic qualities.

The gradual blossoming of Vijaya from a half witted girl to a headstrong woman is very skilfully revealed by the dramatist. Prannarayan, her eunuch attendant, is her friend, guide, philosopher, confidant, and mentor. The various references and hints, which he makes casually, have tremendous influence on her mind resulting in her transformation which is unforeseen and undreamt of by the courtiers. Her confession, “You force me to think” (271), is a truth because she experiences in him the rare fusion of the unselfish caring love of a mother and the protective power of a father.

The sudden demise of King Vichitravirya, results in a great crisis and there emerges power struggle among the members of the cabinet. “A true politician can be loyal only to himself” (288). Taking this as their dictum, every minister aspires to ascend the throne. Vijaya intrudes unknowingly while these power mongers are struggling hard to arrive at a compromise. They are struck with the brilliant idea of electing Vijaya to be the queen hoping to use her as a puppet ruler. The following words “She’ll be the rule, we’ll be the rulers” (293) clearly reveal their misconception and miscalculation. The description, “she stands in
their midst like a startled hare” (293), exposes the bewildered and perplexed state of the inexperienced princess. Their decision proves to be pernicious, for Princess Vijaya may be ignorant of her power but certainly not incompetent or inefficient.

From the very beginning, she commences to ascertain and exercise her will and authority over any conflicting issue. She does not hesitate to break away from the set customs and tradition to shape her visions into missions. She takes earnest efforts to be perfect in all her endeavours. Her analytical ability, with the timely help and suggestions from the wise Prannarayan, enables her to view things from a different perspective yielding to her success every time. Her insistence on cutting the legs of the throne, which is very vehemently objected by the ministers as an unholy act, is a sample. Through the following pungent reply, she begins to assert her superiority and authority over the cabinet as well as reveals her anxiety to befit the throne. “I, about to become your sacred King, order you to cut the sacred legs of this sacred throne. Cutting a throne’s legs isn’t cutting its sacredness! When I sit on the throne, my legs don’t reach the ground; it looks ridiculous! What’ll people think? They’ll say I’m not fit for the throne! So the legs must be cut at least a little” (296). When restrictions, in the name of codes and etiquettes, are imposed upon her, she immediately responds, “I thought that becoming queen gave me greater power” (298) and she determines to evolve into a queen with a difference. Initially she could only demand the respect of the senior ministers which ultimately ends in her commanding their respect.

By the end of the first year of her reign, she has brought in many changes and her citizens enjoy greater privileges. Queen Vijaya’s encounter with the Kadamba tribe makes her witness their sufferings in the form of hunger, poverty, and diseases and she is deeply moved by their mute forbearance. She is carried away by their stoic endurance and sense of self respect. Since justice must be rendered to them, the original natives of the island, she determines to bring in certain reformations for their rehabilitation. The critical problem both for the queen and the courtiers has crept in, thus, in the form of the Kadamba Tribe issue. Her concern for their upliftment is criticized as ‘a barefaced, laughable and childish stunt’
which has earned unanimous condemnation from the cabinet. The courtiers fume and fret for she is not prepared to confine herself prudently to the framework prepared by them and determine to make the true power of the cabinet dawn upon her.

The ministers infuriate the mob provoking it against the queen. Queen Vijaya, now more diplomatic and prudent, very easily turns the table against them. In utter bewilderment and fear, the perpetrators entreat her to protect them from the violent assault. Having attained complete mastery over the situation and the trouble makers, she continues to rule the island in earnest. Behind every successful man is a woman but here behind this successful and highly empowered woman, Vijaya, there is no man but only a eunuch. This might be because Vijay Tendulkar, though a man, wants women to come out with flying colours in their attempts with their own self-will, prudent ways, and persistent efforts and not by either seeking the aid of or soliciting the guidance from men. Such positive portrayals infuse in women great self-confidence and courage to undertake any venture boldly and make men realize the potentialities of women.

Submission to passion is human bondage but the exercise of reason is human liberty. The ‘exercise of reason’ is effectively executed not by men only but by their female counterparts too. Earnest and incessant efforts have been made by women to establish and empower themselves by ‘enhancing their self-esteem, self-confidence and their collective and individual bargaining power’. Literary writers, both men and women, from time immemorial, have been striving to project the tremendous might of women delineating their ineluctable and indispensable role. Portrayal and projection of the subtle qualities of women, in dramas especially, have made greater impact, because the audience could visualize and realize their capabilities, power, and foresight. Shakespeare, for example, has depicted them as infallibly faithful and wise counselors and incorruptibly just and pure examples endowed with an ‘inevitable sense of dignity’. Vijay Tendulkar has aspired to reveal the miserable plight of women in the hands of male chauvinists. Though he seems to vividly portray their affliction and deprivation, through such descriptions, he actually reveals the miserable
dependence of men on their women for their survival. Life is livable and lovable to men so long as their women remain patient, docile, submissive, and protective. When a woman emerges out exposing her grand stature revealing her true self and capabilities, men begin to feel themselves insignificant, desolated, and down in the dumps.

Humanity’s attempts to become civilized commenced from its confrontation with nature. In its urge to distinguish itself from and ascertain its supremacy over the other living creatures, new devices are invented. When societies are formulated, automatically conflicts between them have also crept in. Each section aspires to impose its power and authority over the other, which, in the long run, directs to oppression, suppression, and exploitation. One injustice, for example the gender disparity, spontaneously gives room to many other. While the oppressor enjoys tasting the glory of the power, the oppressed yearns to shift his role.

This division among the people makes the society, “pyramidal where the few at the top usurp the colossal power of the masses at the bottom. [ . . ] As the higher rungs are more privileged and more powerful than the lower rungs, people always struggle hard to scramble up the ladder of power. In that mad rat race, some go up and some go down” (Babu 35). During such maelstrom, three possible roles are undertaken by the people namely, ‘rescuer, persecutor and victim’. They form a triangle called ‘Rescue Triangle’ by Steiner which is explained as follows: “The Rescue triangle is an efficient training ground for the acceptance of hierarchies of power in which every person is one - up to some and one - down to other. Having been in a powerless position, we make ourselves feel better by taking and assuming power over others as Rescuers or Persecutors” (Babu 36). Their positions do not remain constant and in due course of time, as the wheel of fortune rotates, a victim rises to the level of a rescuer or a persecutor while the other two are pushed down to become victims.

The inevitability of this rescuer – persecutor - victim cycle is well established in Vijay Tendulkar’s plays, where power, with its multifarious forms, exhibits its tremendous influence intimidating every character one or other time. Benare in Silence! bullies, criticizes, and jibes the co-actors repeatedly. Though not intended to taunt them, her gestures
have deeply offended their sentiments leaving an ugly scar in their minds. They feel that
they are severely persecuted. Benare, captivated by the unusual intellect of Prof. Damle, in
mad adulation, offers herself in the altar of worship taking him to be her rescuer, where as
Prof. Damle, by ditching her, proved to be her merciless persecutor. Her co-actors gang up
on her trapping her under the garb of judicial power and drive her at her wit’s end. Thus her
victims, who are dangerously deceptive, victimize her but pretend to be her rescuers
expressing their sympathy over her irretrievable state.

In Sakharam, the eponymous hero blows his own trumpet
proclaiming to be the rescuer of destitutes but in actuality proves to
be their persecutor. Laxmi, expelled from her husband’s house due
to her infertility, is rescued by the ‘generous’ Sakharam. In his
house the victim Laxmi is further subdued by the patriarchal authority of her rescuer. But
when she comes across Fouzdar Shinde, Champa’s servile husband, she takes pity on him, a
companion in distress, and tries to be his rescuer. Her effort to rejuvenate him is shown in
figure 3. When she is in a desolated condition being chucked out by her nephew, Champa
comes to her rescue not only by permitting her into Sakharam’s house but by protecting her
from his thrashings too, but Champa ironically falls a prey to Laxmi’s promptings and loses
not merely her place in the house but life in the world. The proud guardian, Sakharam
Binder, who forbids anything to bind or fetter him, meekly surrenders to the will of his
victim, Laxmi, cowed by the heinous crime committed by him. The oppressor thus becomes
the oppressed paving way for the elevation and evolution of Laxmi from a miserable victim
to a protective saviour.

In The Vultures, all the five vultures, who are “accursed to live as men” with their innate
inhuman qualities, fit perfectly into all the three roles, which ultimately result in their
damnation. Hari Pitale, supposed to be the guardian angel of his brother Sakharam and his
children, in reality is a destructive demon devoid of any finer sentiments. The relationship
among the members of this family is purely need oriented and theirs is the world of the
survival of the fittest in which “depravity, cruelty, violence, and obscenity in words and deeds” reign supreme. They are ready to “befriend, betray and torture each other” only to secure money. The children, chip off the old block, have inherited their father’s viciousness and adopted only foul means to the vicissitudes of their lives. Hari Pitale is both the rescuer and the victim because he rescues his children from their financial constraints by signing the cheque but it is accomplished only through severe coercion.

The brothers take drastic actions against their sister first by brutally breaking her leg and next through the “mephistophillic abortion” carried out on Manik’s foetus, not to persecute her immoral codes but to gain monetary benefit. Manik, the scapegoat, persecutes Ramakant by trying to abort Rama in retaliation for the throes she is subjected to. The brothers become mutually each other’s persecutors, rescuers, and victims. Rajininath, the eternal victim, is Rama’s rescuer but persecutes Hari Pitale and Ramakant in due course. All are victims and victimizers in this play.

Jaisingh Jadav, in Kamala, proclaims himself to be the rescuer, championing the cause of the underprivileged. He fails to realize his own chauvinistic nature and turns out to be a callous persecutor. He exploits the obsequious nature of Sarita, his wife, the hapless state of Kamala, whom he has bought as a slave, and the dependent Kamalabai, the servant maid, for his personal upliftment and figure 4, a scene from Kamala, exhibits all the three persecuted victims. His ‘tour de force’, instead of gaining greater glory, causes in his getting the sack from the proprietor. The rescuer, being persecuted, now miserably requires an angel to rescue and protect him from further harassment which is fulfilled by Sarita’s steadfast assumption of that role despite her firmness to assert her individual identity.

The personages in Kanyadaan are victims of their own ideals. Nath, the “repairer of the world” with the help and assistance of his wife Seva, a social worker, strives to fight untouchability tooth and nail. His vision of free India, totally freed from caste aberration,
forces him to inculcate in his own children certain ideals enabling them not to abhor any man but only his tendencies because no man is fundamentally evil. Deeming his ideals for gospel truth, his daughter proposes to marry an upcoming dalit writer Arun, hoping to mend him by dragging out the beast and rousing the God sleeping in him. In the process, the rescuer Nath is atrociously victimized by Arun. The results of Jyoti’s selfless efforts to rescue Arun are counterproductive. Instead of recognizing her genuine care and concern for him, he turns out to be refractory, kicking his pregnant wife in the belly stating that he is “returning all the kicks aimed at generations of his ancestors by men of high caste” (544). Jayaprakash’s observation that yesterday’s victim becomes today’s victimizer sounds infallible as far as this play is concerned. The rescuers are dragged miserably to be his eternal victims and Arun proves to be the most tyrannical and ungrateful persecutor.

The haughty and headstrong Sumitra Dev in A Friend’s Story is victimized by a strictly homophobic society. Despite Bapu’s harrowing experiences due to his association with Mitra, mostly he goes to her rescue. Pande is Bapu’s mentor but a victim of his own relentless fascination for Mitra. Nama is the most pathetic victim dancing to the tunes of both Dalvi and Mitra but at the same time Mitra’s persecutor too. Dalvi is persecuted by Mitra’s strong will and he persecutes the innocent Bapu for the anonymous letters. Bapu attempts to be Mitra’s rescuer but nevertheless proves to be her fatal persecutor.

In Ghashiram, the political and policing powers enjoyed by Nana and Ghashiram respectively, permit Nana to play diplomatically and Ghashiram outrageously the roles of rescuer, persecutor, and victim. When Nana demands Gauri pathetically, he, the victim, is at the mercy of Ghashiram. Nana, at the same time, is the rescuer who uplifts and transforms the miserable victim Ghashiram into a Kotwal. This hapless victim converted into an arrogant persecutor victimizes the innocent people. Gauri, the most unfortunate woman, falls a prey to the hankering Nana and the power monger Ghashiram. She is, in this way, both a rescuer and a victim, redeeming both Nana and her father from their present predicaments during the course of which is reduced to a handful of dust. The supremacy of the political
power entitles the cunning Nana to assume simultaneously the roles of a rescuer and a persecutor by signing the decree of death sentence to Ghashiram. The docile people, the victims so far, turn out to be merciless persecutors of Ghashiram.

Encounter portrays King Vichitravirya as the rescuer of his people but as persecutor of his ministers. The same ministers, after the king's demise, enact as rescuers of Vijaya, the princess, and suddenly swerve as her persecutors due to her non co-operation but eventually doomed to be her victims. Vijaya, assumed to be their victim in the beginning, gradually metamorphoses into their persecutor ultimately resulting in her becoming and being their rescuer. The ways, in which Vijaya tackles her guardians turned persecutors, are quite piquant. Prannarayan, the figurehead, is both the victim of circumstances and the sole rescuer of Vijaya.

This shift in roles, from a victim to a persecutor or rescuer or vice versa, accords the characters the rarest opportunity to experience the afflictions of a miserable victim and to be intoxicated with the glorious power of a rescuer or the thrill of a persecutor. When a power monger or tyrannical system ascertains his or its might on others, it explodes in the form of merciless oppression and lugubrious exploitation causing great friction among the frustrated victims. The rescuer is always revered as a saviour because his Machiavellian ways are never known to the victims. The persecutor's crude and brutal measures leave his victims ever be in the doldrums. Such rude reformers, when display and exercise their power, expect only adherence and no opposition to it. Any slightest trace of disobedience is instantaneously nullified by unleashing violent means. If the persecutor is privileged to enjoy absolute power with no checkmate to challenge his authority, he turns out to be tyrannical and sneers at incapability, strangles the throat of revolt, condemns his subjects' not any felony but mere petty offences, and ultimately forces them to a life of extreme hardship.

Tendulkar, through every play of his, crusades tirelessly to expose the apparent victimization of women, corruption, and exploitation prevalent in society. The depiction of the helplessness of the vast majority that has no voice is poignant and straightforward. It is
obvious that the most significant message in his plays is that “every individual is a pawn in the hands of a system built and based on power. It can exalt a person to stupendous heights or reduce him to a hapless victim. Beneath the evident, indiscriminate exploitation is an inherent feature of a power-obsessed system. The prey as well as the predator who preys, are both victims within a larger frame of reference” (Subramanyam 103). These words are very apt because the patriarchal power in *Sakharam* and *Kamala*, the judicial power in *Silence!*, the political power in *Encounter* and *Ghashiram*, the policing power in *Ghashiram*, the filial power in *The Vultures*, the power of journalism in *Kamala*, the power of the society with its caste system and principles in *Kanyadaan* and the power of cultural values in *A Friend’s Story* bring out vividly the victim-victimizer syndrome prevalent in life.

Vijay Tendulkar is strongly fascinated by not the ordinary but the extra ordinary and eccentric. Hence, his observation of the imposition of power and its aftermath forces him to present “a too terrifying, repulsive, almost barbaric representation of life” (Coelho 35), resulting in the disclosure of violence in all its atrocity and brutality. Bandyopadhyay observes, “A strong ethical concern exploring and critiquing the relations of power in all their complex ramifications is the hub around which Tendulkar’s major plays evolve. Power [...] and violence, as the natural instrumentality that power brings into play, provide the general spear in which these plays are played out” (xlii). When Tendulkar was awarded the Nehru Fellowship, he undertook ‘the emerging patterns of violence’ as the theme for his project and toured far and wide to observe and reflect on it. Violence, according to him, does not exist as something in isolation but as an inherent, inevitable, and inextricable part of ‘the human milieu, human behaviour, and human mind’. His concept is “violence, when turned into something else, can certainly be defined as vitality, which can be very useful, very constructive” (xlii).

The theories of Antonin Artaud and his Theatre of Cruelty have further motivated Tendulkar to delve deep into the human psyche, the breeding ground for all problems. Artaud worked vigorously to wean theatre away from the niceties of conventional theatre.
His earnest wish to direct theatre towards a new path gets exposed in the following words. “Theatre will find its way back to itself again . . . if it provides the spectator with the true essence of dreams in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his neurotic fantasies, his utopian sense of life and things, even his cannibalism gush forth not on a theoretical and illusory level but on an inner plane” (Coelho 31).

Artaud, thus assigned theatre a new mission and direction, and for a playwright like Tendulkar, with his unconventional attitude towards human problem, the occurrence of human violence is no more loathsome or ugly to be shunned but vital and innate in human nature to be analyzed psychologically. He believes that, “violence is a basic quality, this understanding of human nature when translated into play, becomes an explosive piece of art” (Dass 70). He unabashedly presents and defends saying, “the most important point is to keep the violence raw while depicting it on stage, not to dress it up with any fancy trapping and not to make it palatable” (Dass 70).

Tendulkar’s observation of violence in its immensity, multiplicity, and originality, makes him become persistently inquisitive, nonconformist, ruthlessly cold, and brutal as compared to his other committed and human self. Since it cannot be denied that the latent pattern of everyone’s experience in life is “shaped by dark forces - hectic, uncertain, cruel and chaotic”, Tendulkar has felt that it would be a great injustice to ignore the existence of that fundamental principle of an omnipresent cruel outer structure. His “unblinkered perceptions of the world’s inherent cruelty” make him be persistent in reclaiming men from the snares of sophisticated cultures by portraying through the theatre the full-scale invocation of cruelty, violence and terror. In full throated ease, he proclaims through his plays the pervasiveness of cruelty and violence by presenting its predominance at the physical level, psychological level, and verbal level. The seed of violence, sown in the thought, sprouts and expands through words and deeds ensuring its inevitability in life. Violence, whether exercised at the verbal level or physical level, will have a tremendous impact on the psyche of the afflicted person.
In Tendulkar’s plays, violence, imposed and experienced at these three levels, is implied and exposed in all its goriness holding both author and audience in thrall. In *Silence!* and *Kamala* physical assault is absolutely absent but verbal attack is too vehement. In *A Friend’s Story*, words are once again proved to be mightier though Bapu is subjected to brutal physical assault too. But violent actions speak louder in plays like *Ghashiram* and *Sakharam*. The avant-garde playwright Vijay Tendulkar has skilfully and subtly brought out the enormous power of violence in plays like *The Vultures*, *Kanyadaan*, and *Encounter* by not enacting them right in front of the eyes of the audience but by revealing their devastating consequences through reports. Suggested violence, in fact, has lasting effect on the audience than the displayed one.

A word, which is inanimate and lifeless, has the power to change the lives of people if articulated properly and appropriately. If put into atrocious use, such pungent words will stab deeply puncturing and piercing the target’s mind and heart causing irreparable damage. The power of words is best exemplified in Kamala Das’ poem “In Words”. She feels,

... Words

Are a nuisance, beware of them, they

Can be so many things, a

Chasm where running feet must pause to

Look, a sea with paralyzing waves,

A blast of burning air or

A knife most willing to cut your best

Friend’s throat. [...] words are a nuisance. (46)

Thiruvalluvar, a saint poet in Tamil Literature, forewarns every speaker to exercise immense care in the articulation of the tongue, lest it should incur the displeasure of one’s own kith and kin leaving a charred scar mark in their minds.

Words, like God, can both preserve and destroy because they have the infinite power to sooth and comfort an ailing heart as well to pierce and undo a stable mind. The diabolic use
of words and its devastating effects are deftly depicted in *Silence*! Benare's boisterous spirit and bubbling enthusiasm make her play little tricks for the sake of amusement and she has to pay the wages. In her zeal to be a vivacious woman, she has failed to take into account the embarrassment her remarks would cause on others. All their suppressed emotions and pent up feelings flood out vociferously under the garb of the mock trial. Their revelations descend on her hitting as a bolt from the blue. Unable to withstand the fierce current of the flash flood, she falls flat like an uprooted tree to the rancorous delight of her tormentors. Tendulkar’s creative ability has been once again ascertained by the way Benare is introduced in the play. As the opening scene in a Shakespearean play has special significance, the very first dialogue uttered soon after Benare has entered the stage, indicates the assault she would be subjected to in the course of the action. Samant asks, “What’s the matter? Did you catch your finger in the bolt? [. . .] And if the bolt stays out just a little bit, and you don’t pull it clean to one side, then what happens? Shut the door - and you’ve had it! Locked yourself in!” (55). This utterance has dual significance. First, the physical pain caused is indicative of the psychological trauma Benare is in for. Second, the so called meagre information about the improper bolt has a pivotal role to play during the critical moment. Thus every word uttered contributes to a gradual increase so as to maintain the tempo and create the maelstrom.

The ways and means, adopted by Benare to play practical jokes, frighten and tense her co-actors. Her inner perturbation, which eats her away, is hinted at through her conversation with Samant, but by assuming the semblance of a head strong and high spirited woman, she marvelously manages to overcome her personal predicament. Her pranks, she believes, will only amuse and not hurt any one. But when she happens to hint and hit at their sour points, her co-actors join together to hit out at her. All the while, they have been fuming and fretting. By devising to accuse her on the charge of infanticide, they plan to execute their well conceived conspiracy. These people catch her unawares by their abrupt announcement, not allowing her even a breathing gap to grasp what is meant by that. Mr. Kashikar hits the
nail on the head by elaborately stating, “Prisoner Miss Benare, under section No. 302 of the Indian Penal Code you are accused of the crime of infanticide. Are you guilty or not guilty of the aforementioned crime?” (74). Having trapped the victim, they try to plead innocence by naming it just a game. Though rudely shocked and shattered, Benare regains her poise and vitality and tries to laugh the matter off.

The predators, bent on victimizing their prey, begin to unleash verbal violence upon her. Sukhatme’s enquiry reveals their intentions crystal clear.

SUKHATME. [. . .] What is your opinion of the prisoner’s conduct?

KARNIK. (after striking two or three tremendous ‘thinking’ poses). Do you mean, in this mock trial, or in real life?

SUKATHME. In real life, of course. (84)

Hamlet’s firm belief that “. . . there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to colour” (98) helps him to trace the sinners. In Silence! Benare’s stiffened exterior has betrayed herself. Despite the confession that the crime itself is imaginary and only the accused is real, the perverse delight obtained seeing the tormented Benare, forces her predators to proceed further. Their deep immersion into the pseudo-trial makes Samant be one of the witnesses. His version adds greater significance leaving Benare transfixed. He attempts his task with the content of a pocket novel.

Iago’s words in Othello reveal clearly how even insignificant evidence objects become crucial evidences when circumstances go against the victim. Says he, “trifles light as air are to the jealous confirmations strong as proofs of holy writ: this may do something” (101). True to his observation, a passage read from a pocket novel by an utter stranger is taken to be the gospel truth to try against the accused. Benare’s vehement attempt to stop them from further probing makes Mrs. Kashikar protest thus:

MRS. KASHIKAR. But my dear Benare, as your conscience is clear, why are you flying into such a violent rage?

BENARE. You’ve all deliberately ganged up on me! You’ve plotted against me!. (93)
Benare’s strong declamation and stout protest fall into their deaf ears and when she decides to get out of the place, she turns out to be a victim of circumstances as the improper bolt in the door imprisons her. Benare’s helplessness further excites them. Though her face reveals the terror of a trapped animal, their inhuman attitude conveniently ignores it. Mrs. Kashikar, the only other fellow woman, conducts herself unabashedly by abusing her mercilessly. Her following remark “Should there be no limit to how freely a woman can behave with a man? [...] How she sings, dances, cracks jokes! And wandering alone with how many men, day in and day out! [...] Just a while back, she was protesting, ‘It’s a lie! Its’persecution!’ Now how’s she struck dumb? That shows you can’t suppress the truth” (100-101) clearly discloses her burning desire to avenge the working woman.

Hamlet attempts to deduct the truth through the Mouse Trap and boasts, “I’ll have these players play. [...] the play’s the thing, wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king” (109). The players in Silence! do the same wilfully through the mock trial certainly not to make any reparation but mainly to humiliate and subdue Benare. All her personal and strictly confidential affairs are stripped to public scrutiny transforming the bewitching woman with sparkling wit into a bewildered scapegoat. Her long monologue is both a confession and justification but since it never reaches their ears, they do not turn a new leaf and their attitude remains the same till the end. They dissect and tear her into pieces and seeing her hapless condition, the dissemblers, laugh at the whole event as some good fun. Benare’s observation regarding elders’ behaviour, “They [the children] don’t scratch you till you bleed, then run away like cowards” (57) is absolutely true because, not caring to assuage her offended feelings, they begin to make arrangements for the actual show.

The characters in Silence! thus effectively exploit the opportunity making mere words instrumental to achieve the desired result. In Kamala, though the words are not so pungent and harsh, the words used by the major male figure, Jaisingh Jadav, bring to light the way the voiceless women are oppressed and suppressed resulting in great existential angst. Jaisingh, in his curiosity to prove the existence of flesh trade, buys Kamala, a tribal woman, for two
hundred and fifty rupees and his initial kind treatment makes her be his willing and obedient slave. An affectionate gesture is more potent and powerful than physical assault or violent threatening. Jaisingh’s coaxing words achieve significant success than harsh treatment. Augusto Boal, the originator of the Theatre of the Oppressed says, “Sometimes you can oppress by giving, you can oppress through tenderness, you can oppress through suffering” (Babu 36). Jaisingh achieves his end by pretending to be kind and considerate and subjects Kamala, under the guise of the press meet, to public humiliation.

Emboldened by Kamala’s ignorance and helplessness, he permits the other reporters to interrogate her about free sex and other such embarrassing topics. He justifies his stand thus:

KAKASAHEB. Fun! At that poor woman’s expense!

JAISINGH. She couldn’t understand a word. […] She laughed too, just because the others were laughing. She hadn’t understood a thing. And I didn’t expect her to.

I just wanted to present her as evidence. And that was done. (30)

This inhuman treatment perturbs Sarita visibly and the most debilitating question asked by Kamala, “How much did he buy you for?” (34) creates a great domino effect on Sarita making her reel with her own life. Ibsen’s Nora in A Doll’s House, perceives the true colour of her husband, which is as unreliable as that of a chameleon’s, through his failure to rise to the occasion during a trying situation. Like Nora, Sarita too deducts the deceitful nature of her husband through his treatment of Kamala. Though not intended to offend anyone, his words cause devastating revelations to Sarita. All the while she took great pride in her husband’s commitment to duty. Like Brutus’ Portia, she craved to be an ideal better half and assisted him and extended her whole hearted co-operation with the belief that she too had been actively crusading against the ills of the society. But Jaisingh’s behaviour in Kamala’s case opens her eyes and she is not blind to his double standard anymore. His harsh and assertive words do offend her finer and nobler sentiments deeply. She senses that she is not his soul mate but only a bonded labourer and this painful realization, though makes her feel ill at ease, results in her metamorphosis from a bonded slave to an enlightened soul.
Jaisingh’s words force Sarita to extricate herself from the meaningless bond. But in the end, despite Sarita’s yearnings to patch up with him, it can be sensed that their nuptial life will not have the same colour and cosiness. While the blasting power of words is thus emphasized through the impending doom hinted at in Kamala, in A Friend’s Story, Vijay Tendulkar discloses their fatal power. Sumitra Dev, like Benare in Silence!, teases Bapu verbally, which at times is found to be quite loathsome. Though her taunting remarks offend Bapu, he never torments her with his words or deeds. Despite the inconvenience caused by her, he struggles to fulfil her desires and succeeds in his endeavours.

Vijay Tendulkar’s plays are mostly about the doomed youth. A Friend’s Story is no exception. Mitra’s trans-sexual personality and strange desires create a maelstrom in the lives of many youngsters. She assertively stresses to achieve her desired end unmindful of the inconvenience it causes on others. She is extremely pert and curt in her words and impolite in her manners even with a person like Bapu whose heart overflows with the milk of human kindness. This bold and beautiful woman is always commanding and highly demanding and is ablaze with anger if Bapu cites the obstacles in implementing her schemes into actions. All her pungent words, coated with biting sarcasm torment the generous Bapu deeply, but are patiently endured by him because he can perceive her plight. Since “work is love made visible” (Gibran 28), he willingly undertakes any, assigned by her. In sincere earnestness, he has been promptly conducting himself as a true friend. All through the play, it is only Mitra, who confides all her inner turmoil in Bapu and haunts him with her words. But in the end, he flatly rejects her and rudely snaps all his ties with her. His reply with haughty disdain pierces Mitra’s heart ultimately driving her to meet her end. He pours out:

You don’t deserve friendship. [. . . ] I don’t want to do anything for you. Look for some other doormat Go! [. . . ] There was a large heart behind everything I did, larger than you imagined. But you never cared for it. You thought I did what I did because I was a fool. An idiot. Let it be clear to you now that Bapu is no longer like that. I will still help you if it is necessary. I help anyone who
needs it. But as for friendship it's over. You ended it. From now on, do what you like, I won't feel anything. I don't care! You won't be able to make me suffer anymore because I have understood you. (486-88)

Through this utterance, Bapu has brought the curtain down on their friendship.

Mitra's words are never honey coated. She never hesitates to speak out her mind. She is both outright and outrageous. Her words spit venom in the following dialogue.

**SUMITRA.** I never did have a friend. I deceived myself when I thought I had one.

**BAPU.** (Hurt) Mitra, look at it from my side... Just think...

**SUMITRA.** Why should I look at it from your side? Who has the time to think of you? Who are you? Go to hell. I don't care. You think I can't survive without you?. (467)

While Bapu can endure her denunciation and remain level headed, the brave and strong Mitra is broken into pieces when strongly condemned by her only friend. One can witness a sea change in her attitude, for his words have sent her on a guilt trip. Mitra, who had the strong nerve to fight against the world, does not have the grit to digest Bapu's words. The merciless words, springing from the mouth of this docile and humble man, prove to be fatal claiming her life.

In all the three plays, namely *Silence!*, *Kamala*, and *A Friend's Story*, the power of inanimate words over living human beings are effectively depicted. Words, when they are found in a dictionary, seem to be so innocent and powerless, but from the mouth of one who knows how to combine them they exhibit their potent to heal and hurt. In all the three above mentioned plays, the oppressors, sensing the tremendous potency of words to hunt and haunt the lives of people, have efficiently deployed them and inflicted indescribable violence on the victims.

Tendulkar's effective employment of words to project verbal violence astounds the reader and audience. While violence at the linguistic level is so gripping, his portrayal of it at the physical level is gruesome. His depiction of physical violence, though is annoying,
ruthlessly discloses the existing eccentric patterns of human brain. He asserts the inevitability of it in life by stating, "Unlike communists, I don’t think that violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or, for that matter, in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that the human being is born with. Not that it’s bad. Without violence, man would have turned into a vegetable" (Babu 9). Hence, physical violence holds the centre of the stage in his other plays. Tendulkar has aspired to present violence in its rawness. In plays like Ghashiram, Sakharam, and The Vultures, the various features of violence are realistically portrayed on the stage. Tendulkar’s creative mind, through reporting, has presented violence in plays like Kanyadaan and Encounter. The impact of both enacted and implied violence on the reader and audience is inexplicable.

Isavasaya Upanisad deducts the causes for man’s inhuman and disharmonious state. It discloses: “There is a triple-forked process which binds humanity to the lower realms of discord and unhappiness. These three knots are constituted of ignorance, desire and action” (35). The major characters, in Ghashiram Kotwal, Sakharam Binder, and The Vultures, are ignorant about the value of true, genuine, and selfless love. They are excessively ruled by their strong desires which drive them to adopt unfair and even foul means to execute their plans into actions. Hinduism stresses the importance of adopting “honesty, non-injury and self-restraint” (Satyam, ahimsa and brahmacharya) as the ways and ideals to lead one’s life. But the protagonists of these plays are completely devoid of such positive traits thereby making life unbearable to themselves and to their associates.

Ghashiram Savaldas’ humiliating experiences, in the hands of the brahmins of Pune, induce him to take revenge on them. He roars “I’ll make pigs of all of you. I’ll make this Poona a kingdom of pigs” (377). From the moment he has assumed the power as the Kotwal, he proves himself to be a man of great violent actions. He is a ‘lost violent soul’, who enjoys inflicting cruelty on his dependents and his desire to rule with an iron hand is visible through figure 5. “Slapping, pushing, arm-twisting, abusing and whipping become
the order of the day" (Kumar 75). Cruelty does not mean “violence, torture and bloodshed for their own sake, but it means giving vent to man’s repressed animal desires and instincts beneath the veneer of civilized behaviour” (Kumar 72-73).

Ghashiram makes Pune a ‘strict permit raj’ where everything has to be performed with a permit. Figure 6 depicts the plights of people, who have been standing in utter bewilderment not knowing how to dispose the dead body as permit is denied either to bury or cremate and the irresolute fate of the deceased makes them more grief stricken. Innocent deeds are also severely viewed and punished. Genuine requirements are unscrupulously denied. His deeds are of “dreadful note” and people “grope in the stifling dark regions of mystery and irrationality, and suffer from doubt and insecurity” (Knight 160). They are confronted by mystery, darkness, abnormality, hideousness, and therefore by fear which is ubiquitous. In Macbeth’s world, fair is foul and foul is fair but in Ghashiram’s region, fair is foul and foul is also foul. The citizens of Pune in Ghashiram are left with an “overpowering knowledge of suffocating, conquering evil and fixed by the basilisk eye of a nameless terror” (Knight 159).

Ghashi’s attainment of the glorious post at the cost of his daughter’s honour has completely erased any trace of humaneness in him. He feels that morality must be protected, but the irony is, he tries to achieve this by making his daughter immoral. His heartless ways make people shudder in horror and terror. Once, when a brahmin is accused of robbery which is a false charge, the way the case is handled stands as a proof to his cruel nature. The Sutradhar’s sad commentary is “The soldiers come! The nails of the Brahman’s right hand are pulled out. The fingers are washed with lemon juice and soap” (395). The worst is yet to follow. Visual illustrations of this terrible penance presented in figures 7 and 8 show how he has been mercilessly hurt. Commands Ghashiram: “Bring that hot ball over here. Hold his hands.
Tightly. If he yells, don’t let go. Let his hands burn. You should smell them burning. Smell them!” (396). Ghashiram rejoices when the Brahman falls to the ground and writhes in agony. He prides in his achievement of having straightened out Poona. The hard and proud Brahmans are as soft as cotton now because of his dealing them with an iron hand. This above mentioned instance is only the tip of an iceberg.

Ghasiram’s rage and desire for revenge go beyond measure, when he realizes that he has sacrificed his dearest daughter’s life in order to hold the post. He is not only unrepentant, but turns out to be a man-eater also. The malicious glee of Ghashiram and his penchant for human blood are captured in figure 9. He looks at his blood stained hand after killing one and exclaims “Feels good!” (407). These words remind the words of Horatio in Hamlet, where he comments on the grave digger, “custom hath made it in him a property of easiness” (172). But in Ghashiram, it is not only mere easiness that counts, but the immense brutal pleasure, that he obtains by such a gory sight, that frightens people. The people of the city of Poona suffer the incessant slinging arrows of tyranny and autocracy during Ghashiram’s Kotwalship. People, petrified at his bestial ways, crave for the change and Nana, the seasoned politician, knows how to eliminate one evil with another and sanctions permission to the demanding mob to destroy the demon Ghashya. The role of the theatre, according to Artaud, was to show terrible cruelty that the spectators would go away purged of the desire to inflict cruelty on other. Peter Chilver substantiates this notion by saying that only such theatres can achieve this, “where violent physical images caught up in drama as if in a vortex of higher forces pulverize and mesmerize the audiences’ sensibilities” (35). Tendulkar, having been influenced greatly and equally by both the theory of Artaud and violence can effectively achieve, through his plays, the result desired by Peter Chilver.

Violence and the various ways through which it strongly and tremendously manifests itself fascinate Tendulkar. He exhibits the multiple forms and shades of violence in his plays. While, the brutal, cruel, and morbid forms of violence are disclosed in Ghashiram, in
Sakharam, its crude and uncouth forms are exposed. Ghashiram is more a man of violent deeds than words, but Sakharam is a man of both violent words and actions. He unhesitatingly unleashes verbal and physical violence on his dependent Laxmi. He expresses vociferously his demands and expectations and commands instantaneous obedience to them.

Sakharam is a bundle of contradictions. He condemns the destitutes for their reverential attitude to their heartless husbands. He launches a vitriolic attack on them. His angry denunciation is “You women, you’re all the same. Suckled by dead mothers! Corpses! That’s what you are. You get kicked by your husbands and you go and fall at their feet!” (133) and he proclaims, “He’s no husband to forget common decency” (135). But in actuality, he conducts himself as a typical husband. His instructions to the latest entrant Laxmi certify that. He orders “If someone calls, you’re not supposed to look up and talk. If it’s a stranger you’ll have to cover your head and answer him briefly. [. . .] I am the master here. [. . .] In this house, what I say, goes. Understand? The others must obey, that’s all. No questions to be asked. And one last thing . . . you’ll have to be a wife to me” (126).

Sakharam, though vehemently condemns the husbands for their upper handedness and violent nature, is in no way different from them. He scolds Laxmi for her friendship with a black ant. He remonstrates about her behaviour and conversation with the black ant. She becomes tremulous and tries to collect the coals required by him for his chillum. In her anxiety to suppress and wipe her tears, she mishandles the incense burner and the coals fall on her foot. She is in terrible pain and clutches the burning flesh. Sakharam, a witness to the entire mishap, howls, “Good! I hope these coals roast your feet — roast them, nice and brown. I don’t feel a bit sorry” (140).

The burnt foot makes Laxmi undergo only severe physical pain but his words dripped with sarcasm, inflict greater pain at heart. Later, in the night, he wakes her up and compels her to laugh as jubilantly as she did with the ant. He forces her to abide by his word lest she should face dire consequences.

SAKHARAM. Laugh . . . Come on.
LAXMI. Later on, please! Oh, God, my foot! Oh!

SAKHARAM. Then why don’t you laugh? Go on, Laugh, Laugh. (141)

He hurts her burnt foot and threatens to twist that foot if she fails to laugh. Every now and then, she is subjected to physical harassment too. When her power of endurance is at a breaking point, she gives full vent to her suppressed feelings:

I’ve never heard a kind word here. Always barking orders. Curses. Oaths. Threatening to throw me out. Kicks and blows. (wipes her eyes with the end of the sari.) There I was in agony after I’d been belted, and all you wanted me to do was laugh. Laugh and laugh again. Here I am on the point of death and I’m supposed to laugh. Hell must be a better place than this. (whimpers). If I die, I’ll be free of this once and for all. (148)

The next woman, Champa, makes Sakharam’s life colourful and fragrant. But Laxmi’s re-entry creates an undesirable impact on Sakharam. Champa questions his masculine virility and severely castigates him. Sakharam can sense the influence of Laxmi on him and kicks her out. An instance of his use of physical violence to thwart Laxmi is well projected in figure 10. Laxmi discloses Champa’s unfaithfulness and her sexual shenanigans with Dawood. Infuriated by the disclosure, Sakharam pounces on Laxmi like a tiger and beats her right and left. But, in the end, he strangles Champa to death.

Vijay Tendulkar, through his portrayal of Sakharam, exemplifies the life style of a class that is ruled by emotion and passion in which verbal and physical violence predominates equally. At least Sakharam, a poor binder by profession, seems to uphold certain principles - right or wrong - and strives to shape his life in accordance with them. Violence is the means employed and he defies to abide by the common law. Sakharam’s behaviour, to some extent, can be justified because he does not have an opportunity to realize that blood is thicker than water. But the violent ways, executed by the members of the same family against each other, in The Vultures are quite unconvincing and inconceivable. They are solely influenced by
their own selfish motives and designs. They are shameless and go to any extent or stoop
down to any level in order to materialize their fanciful plans.

Tendulkar, himself, names it as an “exceptional family” but stoutly denies the
impossibility of the existence of such a family. He firmly believes that violence is all around
us. Man is a complex phenomenon. “Any attempt at simplification through generalization
would be foolish” (Ramnarayan 111). He electrifies the audience with horror whenever he
launches raw violence. He equates human beings with Mickey Mouse and its Kin, which
fight for survival. He observes: “In this battle one mouse kills another. Many mice gang up.
... and end up ruthlessly destroying one another. I see this as a sort of blind justice”
(Ramnarayan 111). He justifies his portrayal of eccentrics in his plays. He describes:

As for what you call perversion, let us accept that human existence is full of it. We
shut our eyes to it, or worse, don’t recognize it when we come across its
manifestations. Ordinary, nondescript people have all sorts of kinks. I know many
people who enjoy torturing their wives: it can be physical and mental. They are
outwardly decent folk and you don’t suspect that they have this dark side. So when I
deal with masochism or homosexuality, I am drawing your attention to something
near you. (Ramnarayan 116)

Tendulkar has succeeded in creating an awareness regarding the happenings around the
world through his realistic portrayal of life in all its aspects - both the neglected and
celebrated aspects of it.

The desire of power caused the angels to fall. The desire of knowledge caused man to
fall. The desire of wealth causes this family of the vultures to fall. In their eagerness to
increase and establish their financial status without due sincere efforts, they become savages.
This play is about a family where there is no room for any human or humane qualities. They
are animalistic in behaviour and use brute force to yield fruitful result but in vain. Their
existence and lives are “hard and bitter agony” for them like “death, their own death”. These
modern men, like the figures depicted in Eliot’s “The Hollow Men” and “The Waste Land”,
are the denizens of Dante’s Limbo, whose inhabitants are wretched souls. Their lives are noted for its infamy.

Life, here, is crippled, cribbed, and condemned because that is not life, that is no life, and their “life is death”. There is neither parental care, nor filial debt evinced or experienced among the members. There is lack of mutual love and trust between the man and his wife. Brothers do not care to protect their sister and the sister never bothers to shower love and affection on the other members.

This family is absolutely devoid of any sense of belonging and the members do not feel committed to each other. Gibron sings the glory of work. “When you work with love, you bind yourself to yourself and to one another and to God. To love [as well as to live] life through labour is to be intimate with life’s inmost secret” (27). These people in The Vultures fail to grasp the value of willing industry and selfless love. They join together, not out of love or care for the other, but, only to conspire against or to coerce their common victim. Manik, the sister, never trusts the other members in the family. But when she suspects that her father has hidden away money, she joins hands with her brothers. She clearly instructs and states, “We must look sharp when we make our plans” (221). After successfully driving away their uncle, they indulge in merrymaking and help their father enjoy a lot. She reminds them promptly: “Ramya, Umya, how much longer is it going to be? I’m getting sleepy, I can tell you. Now what’re you waiting for? Eh, Umya? Finish it once and for all. Eh?” (227). She is very meticulous in carrying out the plan. She locks both the doors and takes the phone receiver off the hook. Once the preliminary arrangements are made, the men drive their father to come out with the secret. They feign a fight getting their Pappa between them. He screams pleading for mercy. He cries, “Oh! Oh! Oh! No, no! Don’t kill me! . . . Don’t kill me! . . . (On his face, in his body, there is immeasurable fear. He sits trembling violently). Don’t kill me, all of you. I beg you not to kill me . . . please don’t” (229).

These children are in no way better or worse than Goneril and Regan in King Lear. The difference is, Goneril and Regan flattered their father to become prosperous and became
heartless by turning blind to his pathetic and pitiable conditions but the siblings in The Vultures are inhuman and brutal from the beginning and are least affected by the fear and afflictions of their father. When the father refuses to transfer his bank account to his children, he is brutally attacked. Ramakant, from the back, and Umakant, from the front, both catch hold of Pappa and he is forced to consent to the proposal. The children, thus, exercise physical violence to grab the money from their father. Hari Pitale, the father vulture, for fear of life, flies away “from the hollow of a tree where he lived” (232).

Their behaviour remains the same with anyone. They never differentiate or distinguish but treat alike all, man or woman and young or old. When they play a game of cards, Manik is defeated and Umakant assaults her because she refuses to give immediately one rupee and twenty paise.

MANIK. Ohh! You’re twisting my neck – so tight! Ahh! Let go! Let go of me, I say! Let me go, Umya . . .

RAMAKANT. Don’t bloody let her go. Umya! Drag the bloody money out! Look, how she’s wriggling! Squash her bloody neck! Twist it! (235)

Their desire for money rules them madly and the brothers begin to exploit any situation for their benefit winking at the discomfiture and afflictions they cause on others. They break Manik’s leg unhesitatingly and thereby force her to stay at home, otherwise their plan to blackmail the Raja of Hondur will be divulged by her. The brothers are thoroughly disillusioned due to the Raja’s untimely death and their unfulfilled desire induces them to take revenge on Manik. Their heartlessness and mercilessness are deftly depicted through their plan to kick out Manik’s foetus:

UMAKANT (drawing him close). Let’s knock him out! The Raja in little Manik’s belly! One kick - that’s enough! I’ve no football practice. You’ll be able to kick. (Laughs in his throat).

RAMAKANT : Come on. I’ll give such a kick, he’ll fly up to the bloody Skies . . . Come on . . . (247-48)
Their bestial nature is revealed through the barbaric act of feticide. They do not regard it a 
sin and they cannot be sent on a guilt trip by anything.

They are ecstatic over their accomplishment. While they derive rancorous delight by 
assaulting others physically, Manik inflicts greater pain and fear by haunting Rama both 
physically and psychologically. Few scenes of unimaginable violence are enacted whereas 
others are implied through the effective employment of sounds thereby intensifying the 
involvement of the reader and the audience over the happening. Violence, suggested through 
sounds and gestures, makes its influence more gripping than the one displayed right in front 
of the eyes as Caesar dead happened to be more powerful than Caesar alive. Vijay Tendulkar 
has exposed the effect of implied violence very skilfully in his Encounter and Kanyadaan.

In Encounter, throughout the play, there are games of hide and seek between the Queen 
and courtiers, which are finely and subtly demonstrated as verbal combats. The incessant 
attempts, made by the courtiers to subdue the stubborn queen, Vijaya, cannot bring the 
expected output. Vijaya, who had been taken to be a playful, thoughtless, and an inefficient 
younger, is proving to be tactful, prudent, and diplomatic. She devises certain plans in 
order to maintain the unity and efficiency of the government. The ministers strongly object 
to her proposals thereby trying to curb and curtail her power and authority. This power game 
gains momentum in the form of the Kadamba issue. Queen Vijaya at one side, and the 
courtiers at the other side take severe efforts to win.

Vijay Tendulkar’s expressive ability and narrative skill are at their best in the last scene. 
Queen Vijaya proves to be as shrewd and unperturbed as King Magnus in Shaw’s The Apple 
Cart. The Courtiers’ hypocrisy, pseudo-ideals, greediness, cowardice, and deceitful nature 
are spontaneously brought out through their own words and deeds. Their eagerness to throw 
away the queen through foul means and the sneak escapism of these seasoned politicians are 
realistically projected by the playwright. Karkashirsha for example declares that the methods 
of others are highly distasteful to him but regrets that no stones are being thrown yet by the 
infuriated mob, which clearly reveals his insensitivity to human suffering. Pistakeshi has
made arrangements to burn some vehicles but boasts to be a sensitive man. He anticipates the death of ten or twenty during the riot. Through their discussions and the various sound sequences, the atrocities taking place around the palace are effectively depicted.

Queen Vijaya’s calm, brave, and composed countenance is strikingly different to the careworn, terror-stricken, and cloudy countenance of the courtiers. The mob outside is outrageous and dreadful. It has been craving for vengeance with a penchant for blood. Queen Vijaya can easily perceive the demand of the crowd and she satiates its thirst for revenge by letting Bhagadanta face the crowd. The mob, as uncontrollable as the one in *Julius Caesar*, thrashes him soundly.

Cinna in *Julius Caesar* cries “I am Cinna, the poet, not the conspirator” (59). His pleadings fall upon the deaf ears of the violent mob and he is literally torn into pieces. But Bhagadanta, in *Encounter*, manages to survive. Pranarayan’s report, regarding the vigorous attempts of the angry crowd to burn down the palace and the wild chase between the soldiers and the crowd, panics the courtiers. Vijaya is an able administrator and a wise ruler. She is as tactful and diplomatic as Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar*. Antony attempts to appeal to the sentiments of the most unwilling mob. He senses their pulse and mood and starts by declaring, “I come here to bury Caesar not to praise him” (52). With carefully measured words, he touches the conscience of the infuriated mob and succeeds in inducing it against the assassinators. Like Antony, Vijaya also realizes that if she fails to rise to this do or die crisis, she can never command the respect and co-operation of the courtiers. Hence, she bravely offers herself to face the mad crowd. She faces the mob boldly thereby bringing out the ministers’ disinclination to contribute anything to the welfare of their country. Her sui generis approach enables her to cater to the needs and expectations of the wild crowd and to turn the table against the inducers. This prudent woman, within no time, brings down the enraged crowd under her thumb by sanctioning their demands. She expresses in exhilaration:

It was a thrilling moment. We saw that the crowd was getting what it wanted. Then, someone with a whining voice shouted from behind, ‘The Kadamba Plan must be
scraped!’ Four weak voices repeated it. We realized that something had to be done at once. The crowd was still unsated. We shouted, ‘Down with the Plan—and the Ministers who made it!’ It was a thrilling experience [. . .] While the crowd were shouting your names, we promised to hand you over to them and to meet them from time to time hereafter [. . .] Now it is our cabinet’s turn. (353-54)

The selfish ministers have been checkmated. The very concept of meeting the unwieldy mass makes them shiver in their shoes and they surrender themselves to the Queen begging her thus: “The protection of the cabinet is here after the d-duty of the Throne!” (355). With her great presence of mind and characteristic diplomacy, she establishes her supremacy and attains complete mastery over them. Tendulkar, through the perfect blend of sound and words, has arresting deployed one of the, otherwise, goriest scenes in literature on the stage much to the excitement and enjoyment of the onlookers.

In Encounter, a drama on politics, Tendulkar has dealt with the power game in his own characteristic way, in which the violence, advocated due to the potent fury of the uncontrollable mob, is brought out picturesquely with all its vigour and madness not through enactment but through mere verbal depiction. When implied violence, at the social level, can be so realistically delineated by the skilful playwright, Vijay Tendulkar, his portrayal of it at the personal level in Kanyadaan is poignant, heart rending, and disheartening which affects the reader and the audience profoundly.

Among the three male characters in Kanyadaan, the father, Nath, and the brother, Jayaprakash, aspire to uplift and emancipate the life standard of the under-privileged. The other person, Arun Athavale, is an angry young man. He grieves over the pitiable and helpless state of his people but never takes any measures to redress their afflictions. Instead, his pent up feelings and emotions blaze with arrogance against the upper class society. One appreciable trait in him is his confession. He openly declares his inability to acclimatize with the urban culture. He admits, “Surely we can’t fit into your unwrinkled Tinopal world” (513). The undying urge in him to avenge the elite upper class is apparent through his
following utterance. “At times a fire blazes - I want to set fire to the whole world, strangle throats, rape and kill. Drink up the blood of the beasts, your high caste society” (514). At the slightest provocation, he turns out to be bestial. He warns Jyoti after brutally twisting her hand, as displayed in figure 11, and discloses that when anyone throws him a challenge, he is provoked. He neither regrets nor rectifies his ways but claims that to be his manner. When, Seva questions him the reasons for assaulting Jyoti, he remains unperturbed and debates with her justifying his ways.

ARUN. What am I but the son of scavengers. We don’t know the non-violent ways of brahmins like you. We drink and beat our wives . . . we make love to them . . . but the beating is what gets publicized . . .

SEVA. Drunk or sober, wife-beating is called barbarism.

ARUN. I am a barbarian, a barbarian by birth. When have I claimed any white collar culture?. (540)

He coolly asserts that he would remain exactly that.

Jyoti’s determination to live with him offers him ample opportunities to exercise his will and authority over Jyoti thereby satisfying his mind, which craves for revenge. He is violent in temperament and behaviour. This victim turns out to be a victimizer. But all his ruthless treatments are reported and never executed. Seva, Jyoti’s mother, expresses in deep anguish the agonies of her pregnant daughter who is being kicked in the belly by Arun. She informs Nath, “The truth is that your dalit son-in-law, who can write such a wonderful autobiography, and many lovely poems, […] wants to kick his wife in the belly. Why not? Doesn’t his wife belong to the high caste? In this way he is returning all the kicks aimed at generations of his ancestors by men of high caste” (543-44). She tears open Arun’s mask and discloses his true colour. She makes Nath realize the truth by presenting forth the actual happening.

The unblemished and impeccable qualities of Nath and Seva, the two flawless personalities, rouse Arun to take revenge and he spews venom in words. He mercilessly
taunts Jyoti by abusing them in the most abominable manner. Jayaprakash’s analysis perfectly befits Arun. His assumption is that the very victims of violence may go on to perpetrate the same brutal violence upon others. Perhaps those who are hunted derive great pleasure in hunting others when they get an opportunity to do so. The oppressed are overjoyed when they get a chance to oppress others. “In other words, yesterday’s victim is today’s victimizer. If he has been shot at yesterday, he shoots today . . . Therefore, there is no hope of a man’s gaining nobility through experience, he can only become a greater devil” (547). The play ends with an anti-climax where Jyoti disowns her brother and parents and submits herself to be a willing slave to the atrocious Arun.

The domestic violence is projected even in Sakharam, but at its gross physical level subjecting the victims to cruel and brutal thrashings and kicking. The scene of violence in Kanyadaan is more powerful because Jyoti is not a helpless destitute like Laxmi in Sakharam and the purpose of her willing surrender is to experiment her father’s ideals. Jyoti, an educated idealist, is harassed by her ruthless husband in the most unmerciful manner. He assaults and haunts her at all the three levels namely verbal, physical, and psychological. Her afflictions and humiliations are not presented on the stage but depicted poignantly by the distressed and disheartened mother Seva. Vijay Tendulkar, through such an indirect mode, which makes Jyoti, it more emphatic and poignant.

Tendulkar has deliberately attempted to bring out the demonic traits of people through all these plays. The exposure of and to violence directly through enactment on the stage is undoubtedly shuddering, shocking, and dispiriting. The implied violence, exposed through indirect means like reporting, sound effects, and discussion, has not only greater and lasting impact but also intensifies the sufferings underwent by the victims, which are evocative.

Vijay Tendulkar, a sensitive playwright, with his keen eyes, sharp ears, feeling heart, and alert mind has observed, perceived, captured, and projected in these eight plays the crucial issues of life in all its ruthlessness, ugliness, and rawness. According to him, a writer is neither a social scientist nor an astrologer. He does not strive for answers on a mathematical
basis. "He only perceives or feels and this makes him restless". He confesses, "And I have 
the same restlessness today" (Choudhury 39). He is a witness to the society’s as well as the 
individual’s hypocrisy, insincerity, promiscuity, dishonesty, and other ills. As a committed 
playwright, he has felt the urge to disclose what he deducted and felt. Hence, he has 
delineated the “alienation of the modern individual, satirized contemporary politics, depicted 
social and individual tensions, portrayed the complexities of human character, and exploited 
man-woman relationship” (Dharan 93). His special attention is drawn to the plight of women 
in the male dominated society, the imposition of power over the suppressed, and its tragic 
consequences in the form of violence. The violence that is seen in his plays, testifies to 
Tendulkar’s awareness of the violence in the psyche of modern man. The following 
observation of N.S. Dharan brings out the essence of Tendulkar’s plays eloquently.

Most of his plays are studies in violence, power and repression, in different forms in 
the contemporary Indian reality. His preoccupation with violence manifests itself in 
the male-manipulated cruel game garbed as ‘mock-trial’ in Silence!, an ambitious 
young journalists craze for investigative journalism in Kamala, the creative Dalit 
young man’s sadistic treatment of his Brahmin wife in Kanyaadan, Sakharam 
Binder’s boastful proclamations of insatiable ‘itch’ in the eponymous play, the 
cruelty that the two brothers and sister practise in Vultures, and in the inhuman 
punishment Ghashiram Kotwal metes out to both the innocent and the guilty in 
Ghashiram Kotwal. All these plays are in fact, spectacles of violence, overt or 
Covert. (106-07)

Tendulkar’s focus on the hitherto neglected aspects of life opens up new avenues to the 
modern literary scenario. His massive literary output contributes to a “remarkable 
transformation of the modern literary landscape”. The various crucial issues inherent in life 
are effectively delineated in his plays. The act of writing itself is an aesthetic search. For 
Tendulkar, the primary compulsion has been humanistic. “Man’s fight for survival, the 
varied moralities by which people live, the social position of women, the covert or overt
violence in human beings, these are his abiding concerns. They appear in his plays in different forms” (Choudhury 80). He firmly believes that “the battle of survival will see man going against some of his traits and characteristics” (Choudhury 39). His realization, that life means grim struggles, compels him to depict the agonies, suffocations, and cries of man. His perceptive ability has identified the “inter-relationship between the human mind, psyche and body which are the tripods making up a personality” (Kumar 29).

The battle of survival instigates human beings to be hypocritical, selfish, vengeful, scheming, cunning, helpless, inhuman, sadistic, and diplomatic. The complexities of human character are best brought out in Tendulkar’s dramatic personages. The problems of gender disparity, power manipulation, and violent action are impressively exemplified through his characters. A study of the vital roles of characters in effectively enhancing the themes is undertaken in the forth coming chapter “Unveiling".