Chapter - I      Indian Drama and Vijay Tendulkar

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“Good-bad, right-wrong, once you tag things like that, you lose the ability to see the complete truth....
A murderer can also be a loving father. Don't tag things.”

- Vijay Tendulkar

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Chapter-I

Indian Drama and Vijay Tendulkar

"What is Art? It is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the Real".

- Rabindranath Tagore

1.1. The Art of Drama: An Introduction

Since its dawn, the human race has been relying on art as a medium of expression of emotions. The eternal interest in artistic expressions has helped in the evolution of human civilization and culture. Art is concerned with expression and the tradition of drama has been acknowledged as the oldest and the most authentic expression of human sensibility in the realm of literary creations. This is also endorsed by Edwin Forest: "A passion for the dramatic art is inherent in the nature of man (an internet entry).

Drama is closer to human life as compared to other literary forms. It is often referred to as the mirror of the world. Robert Aris Willmott calls drama "the book of people"(an internet entry). It is an idea which is borne in the mind of the writer and is executed and accomplished when it touches the heart of its spectators with a successful stage performance. In other words, it is a literary form for the expression of human sentiments in which actors play the parts assigned to them and utter the written dialogues. Boulton Marjorie defines drama as 'literature that walks and talks before our eyes'. For its possibilities of direct communication between the sensibility of the audience and the sensibility of theatre artists, it has been instrumental in introducing socio-ethical changes during all ages, cultures and traditions. In the words of Arthur Miller:
By whatever means it is accomplished, the prime business of a play is to arouse the passions of its audience so that by the route of passion may be opened up new relationships between man and men, and between men and man. Drama is akin to other inventions of man in that it ought to help us to know more and not merely to spend our feelings. (an internet entry)

1.1.1. The Origin of Indian Drama

The origin of drama has always been deeply rooted in the religious instincts of mankind. This is true of the Greek, Chinese, Egyptian, the modern Christian drama and the Indian drama. Like poetry and other ancient Indian art forms, the Indian drama seems to have been of religious origin. In Natya shastra, attributed to Bharat and written more than two millennium ago, there is a legend regarding the origin of drama. An encyclopedia dealing with all possible aspects of drama, Natya shastra describes how drama came into existence. When asked about the origin of Natyaveda, Muni Bharat replied that, once all the gods headed by the great Indra prayed to Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe to produce an object for diversion which must be audible as well as visible and which belong equally to all the varnas of the society. Lord Brahma then, with the resolution of making the fifth veda, conceived the Natyaveda by taking the recitative (pathya) from the Rigveda, the song from the Samaveda, the histrionic representation (abhinaya) from the Yajurveda and sentiments (rasa) from the Atharvaveda. Thus the dramatic art was aroused out of the Vedas and their limbs. Its aim was to inculcate and to promote all the four purusharthas (dharma, artha, kama, moksha) that were assumed essential to sublimate the baser instincts of human nature. The comprehensive range of Indian drama is also endorsed by K.R. Srinivasa Iyngar who admits that, "Indian drama was expected to comprehend whole arc of life, ranging from the
material to the spiritual, the phenomenal to the transcendent and provide at once relaxation and entertainment, instruction and illumination" (qtd. in Agrawal 2).

Drama and dramatic art are also referred to in the great epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. *Astadhyayi*, the great grammar of Sanskrit, written by Panini, 400 years before the Christian era deals with the relevant details regarding drama. Manmohan Ghosh, in the Introduction to the translated version of *Natyashastra*, ascribed to Bharata Muni, discusses the definition of *Natya* which assists in understanding what exactly is meant by the term 'Natya' or what was regarded as the essence of the dramatic art by ancient Indian theorists, as opposed to the arts of poetry, fiction or painting: "A mimicry of the exploits of Gods, the Asuras, Kings as well as of house holders in this world is called drama"(xxix).

This description resembles Cicero’s view that drama is a copy of life, a mirror of custom, a reflection of truth. This also reminds one of Aristotle’s view that art in general consisted of imitation (mimesis). Before the monumental tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus existed, the Indian drama had its own well developed dramatic theory and established convention of dramaturgy. Elaborate rules, as to how drama is to make mimicry of the exploits of men and their divine or semi divine counterparts, is laid down in the *Natyashastra*. The ancient Indian drama has been called by the later Indian theorists 'a poem to be seen' due to these elaborate rules of representation. This term differentiates epic, narrative poetry and fiction at once from drama which is pre eminently a spectacle, which includes mimicry of activities of mortals, gods or demigods.

The drama, therefore, naturally continued to be looked upon by the Indians as spectacles even after great playwrights like Bhasa, Kalidasa, Sudraka, Bhavabhuti and Visakhadatta had written their plays which in spite of their traditional form were literary masterpieces. Being essentially an art to be visualized, the judgment of drama should
properly rest with the people called upon to witness them. An ideal type of drama has been very aptly summed up by Kalidasa who says that drama should provide satisfaction to people who may differ a great deal in their tastes.

This was not only the ancient Indian view, even the modern producers, in spite of their enlisting the services of professional (dramatic) critics, depend actually on the opinion of common people who attend the dramatic performances. However, the ancient Indian drama, unlike its modern counterparts, did possibly never become an ordinary amusement of everyday life. It was found to be acted sometimes for moral edification as in case of Buddhist plays, sometimes for the aesthetic enjoyment of the elite as in the case of Kalidasa’s work and sometimes in honor of a deity as in case of Bhavabhuti’s plays.

Dating to the days of Bhasa, Bhavabhuti and Kalidasa, drama in India boasts of a rich history. The earliest plays were written in Sanskrit, based on Vedas and Upanishads. The range of Sanskrit drama encompasses historical plays, romantic plays, humorous and satirical plays, Vasa’s Swapan-Vasavaduttam, Kalidasa’s Abhijanasakuntalam, Sudrak’s Mudra Rakshasa and Bhavabhuti’s Uttar Ramcharitam are some of the great works not only in the Indian but in the global context also. These texts are milestones in the rich and lavish tradition of Indian drama which till date continue to inspire men of letters both in India and abroad.

1.1.2. Indian Drama in English: A Brief Survey

Down the centuries Indian drama has undergone various metamorphoses and, it still continues to flourish in all regional languages. So far as Indian drama in English is concerned, it has to be conceded that an appreciative growth is yet to be registered in this
genre. N.S. Dharan in his article "Indian English Drama-A Survey" in *The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar* observes:

Early Indian English playwrights could not enjoy the patronage of a English-knowing, elitist audience and hence, the growth of Indian English drama remained for a while lethargic. English being a foreign language, was not intelligible to the masses and playwrights, too, found it difficult to write crisp, natural and graceful dialogues in English. (16)

Despite these obvious limitations, some Indian English playwrights did make an earnest endeavor to write plays in English. Krishna Mohan Banerjee wrote the first Indian English plays *The Persecuted or Dramatic scenes of the Present state of Hindoo society in Calcutta* in 1837. It was the first play written by an Indian in English. It was less a play and more a dramatized debate of the conflict between orthodox Hindu customs and the new ideas introduced by Western education. It remained a solitary effort not only in Bengal but also elsewhere in India for more than a generation. The real journey of Indian English drama began with Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s *Is This Called Civilization* which appeared in 1871. His *Nation Builders* was published posthumously in 1922. Ramkinoo Dutt’s *Manipura Tragedy* (1893) completes the all too brief tale of Indian English Drama published in Bengal in nineteenth century. Indian English drama, thus, made a humble beginning in the 19th century Bengal.

It assumed an independent form in the initial decades of the twentieth century. Chronologically, the hundred year journey of Indian drama can be classified into three parts:

1. Pre-independence drama that include the dramatic creations of Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya.
2. Post-independence drama that represents the dramatic art of G.V. Desani, Pratap Sharma, Gurucharan Das, Lakhan Deb and Asif Currimbhoy.

3. Contemporary Indian English drama that includes the radical social drama of Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh and Mahesh Dattani.

It is important to recognize the fact that Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and H.N. Chattopadhyaya popularly known as the ‘big three’ amongst English knowing Indian audience made an epoch making and abiding contribution to the development of Indian English Drama. Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, the two great sage-poets of India, are the first Indian dramatists in English. Tagore’s plays *Chitra, The Post Office, Sacrifice, Red Oleanders, Chandalika and Mukta Dhara* are now available in their English versions. Some of them were translated by Tagore himself from Bengali, while others by Indian and English translators. While translating his own works from Bengali into English, Tagore made extensive changes in both matter and manner. As a matter of fact, his translated works should be called transcreated and not translated.

Sri Aurobindo wrote five complete blank verse plays, besides his six incomplete plays. His complete plays are *Perseus the Deliverer, Vasavadutta, Radoguna, The Viziers of Bassola* and *Eric*, each of these is written in five acts. The notable feature of Sri Aurobindo’s plays is that they depict different cultures and countries in different epochs, ranging with variety of characters, moods and sentiments. Another playwright who has made significant contribution to the growth of Indian English drama is Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. He started his career as playwright with *Abu Hassan* (1918). There are seven verse plays to his credit published under the title of *Poems and Plays* (1927), and all the seven plays are based on the lives of Indian saints. His *Five Plays* (1929) are written in prose.
The next great name is A.S. P. Ayyar who wrote six plays. *In the Clutch of the Devil* (1926) is his first play and the last one is *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* (1942). P.A. Krishnaswamy is also a name in the history of Indian English drama whose fame is chiefly for his unusual verse plays *The Flute of Krishna*. Another dramatic voice on the Indian literary scene that demands attention is that of T.P. Kailasam. He wrote both in English and Kannada. Though Kailasam is regarded as the father of modern Kannada drama, his genius finds its full expression in his English plays such as *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfillment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karna* (1964) and *Keechaka* (1949).

Bharati Sarabhai is the modern woman playwright during the colonial era of Indian English drama. She has written two plays *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952), with some considerable measure of success. Of these two plays, the former is symbolic, poetic and a significant contribution to the Gandhian social order, while the latter is realistic, written in prose and probes the private world of a sensitive individual. J.M. Lobo Prabhu is the last great name in pre-independence Indian English drama. He has written over a dozen plays, but only *Mother of New India: A Play of India Village in Three Acts* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945) appeared before Independence.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the theatre movement in the Indian Languages had gathered momentum under the influence mainly of the British drama; whereas the theatre in English received no chance to develop. From 1940 onwards, several dramatic organizations were launched, but none devoted itself exclusively to the drama in English. Notable among these were the Indian National theatre, established under the leadership of Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay during World War II, whose first production was a ballet based on Nehru’s *The Discovery of India*, Ebrahim Alkhazi’s Theatre unit and Bhartiya Natya Sangha affiliated to the world Theatre Centre of UNESCO.
Several regional amateur theatres have also flourished from time to time. These include Sombhu Mitra’s Bahuroopi in Bengali, the Hindi Natya Parishad, the Kala Kendra, Rangabhoomi and Natyamandal in Gujrat, the Prithvi Theatres and the Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha in Mumbai, The Telugu Little Theatre and the Andhra Theatre foundation, the Seva Sangha in Chennai and Dishantar in Delhi. It is significant that the Little Theatre Group was established in 1947 as an English theatre, but eventually changed over to Bengali in 1953.

In the Post-Independence era, the patterns of Indian English drama underwent a drastic change. Theatrical activities were organized, and accumulated a new force during this period. Performing arts were employed as an effective means of public enlightenment during the First Five Year Plan (1951-54). As a result, the National School of Drama was established under the directorship of Alkhazi. Institutions for training in dramatics were founded in big cities. Rukmini devi Arundale’s Kala Khsetra at Adyar, Madras and Mrinalini Sarabhai’s Darpana in Ahmedabad are notable examples for this kind of theatre. Drama departments started functioning in several universities. The Annual Drama Festival was started in New Delhi by the Sangit Nataka Academi in 1954. Visits of foreign troops were arranged from time to time by the British Council and the U.S. Information Service.

With such an encouragement playwrights writing during the 1960s wrote more brilliantly than the earlier ones, the primary reason being that they were writing plays to be acted. Notable amongst them were Nissim Ezekiel with his Nalini and Sleep Walkers; Gieve Patel with his Princes and Savaksa and Pratap Sharma with his A Touch of Brightness and The Professor has a War Cry. In the dramatic scene of post independence, Asif Currimbhoy has secured a prestigious status for himself with the contribution of thirty plays on a variety of themes. It was at the end of this decade in 1968, that the Theatre Group, Bombay, announced the Sultan Padamsee Award for Indian plays in English. This award was won by
Gurcharan Das *Larins Saheb* and this group produced it in Bombay in 1969. Gieve Patels’ *Princes* and Dina Mehtas’ *Myth Makers* also competed for this award. Cyrus Mistrys *Doonga Ji House* won the second Sultan Padamsee award in 1978. This play dealt with the declining fortunes of a Parsi family living in the Parsi heartland—Bombay. Dina Mehta is also an award-winning playwright—her play *Brides are Not for Burning* won an international award from the B.B.C. in 1979.

Regarding contemporary Indian drama, it may be said that it has deviated from the classical and European models, and is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical qualities. It is not the offspring of any specific tradition and it has laid the foundation of a distinctive tradition in the history of world drama by reinvestigating history, legend, myth, religion and folk lore in the context of contemporary socio-political issues. Among the major dramatists who have given a distinctive shape to this enormous mass of creative material are Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Habib Tanvir, Indira Parthasarathy, Badal Sircar, Mahashweta Devi and Mahesh Dattani. In this context, M.K. Naik points to the distinct native trend emerging in the modern English drama in India:

But during recent years Vernacular Indian drama has increasingly been turning to folk forms and tapping their springs of vitality with splendid results, Girish Karnad’s use of the ‘Yakshagana’ in the Kannada play, *Hayavadana* and Vijay Tendulkar of ‘Dashavatar’ and ‘Khele’ techniques in the Marathi play, *Ghasiram Kotwal*, the adaptation of ‘Bhavai’ in two Gujarati plays, Dina Gandhis’ *Mena Gurjari* and Bahut Tripathis’ *Leela*, the employment of the Jatra motif in Utpal Dutt’s *Jokumariswara* and Badal Sircar’s *Evam Indrajit*. . . are prominent recent examples. (187)
Thus, it is mainly the drama in Indian languages and the drama in English translation that have registered a remarkable growth in recent decades. During the last few years, several plays, originally written in the regional language, have been translated into English. Today, a sizeable number of such plays do exist. According to many academics, these translations are significant to be incorporated into the corpus of Indian English literature because they contribute an important component of it. Kaustav Chakraborty, in his article "Representative Playwrights of Indian English Drama" asserts this:

Indian English drama is an umbrella term that denotes not only the Indian plays written in English but also the bhasha plays that are translated into English. Modern Indian English Theatre has, on the one hand, with the application of various modern theories and innovative tools, extended its focus from rural to urban India, while on the other these plays, as a part of ‘Theatre of Roots’ movement, are significant in their binding of the traditional form of Indian theatre with the modern. (1)

Such translations of plays have forged an effective link between the East and the West, the north and the South of India, and contributed in no small measure, to the growing harmony and richness of contemporary creative consciousness.

According to Indranath Chaudhary, when the Sahitya Akademi was set up in 1954, Dr. S Radhakrishnan spelt out its objective as the promotion of the unity of Indian literature despite India’s geographical, political, social and linguistic diversities, Dr. Radhakrishnan gave a slogan to the Akademi that Indian literature is one, though written in many languages. It is in this context that the plays of Girish Karnad in Kannad, Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, Badal Sircar in Bengali and Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi assume significance. Of these artists Vijay Tendulkar occupies a unique place as noticed by Arundhati Banerjee in a Note on Kamala.
In the 1960s four dramatists from different regions of India, writing in their own regional languages, were said to have ushered modernity into the sphere of Indian drama and theatre. They were Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, Badal Sircar in Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi and Girish Karnad in Kannada. Rakesh’s untimely death left his life’s work incomplete and Karnad has written only intermittently. Sircar, of course has been almost as active as Tendulkar, though his plays can be divided into three distinct periods. Tendulkar, however has not only been the most productive but has also introduced the greatest variations in his dramatic creations. (583)

1.2. Vijay Tendulkar: Life Sketch and A Discussion of his Literary Genius

Give me a piece of paper any paper, and a pen, and I shall write as naturally as a bird flies or a fish swims.

(Vijay Tendulkar, "The Play is the Thing")

A name that is a milestone in modern Indian theatre and literature, a writer profound in content and prolific in quantity. Today this most prolific writer has to his credit twenty eight full length plays, seven collections of one act plays, six collections of children’s plays, four collections of short stories, three essays besides seventeen film scripts and a novel, all in a span of fifty years. He had been writing untiringly for more than five decades and has touched effectively most of the concerns close to the people of this complex and diverse
Writing gives me a pleasure which has no substitute. However tired I am, physically or mentally, the moment I pick-up the pen and begin running it on a paper – any piece of paper – I feel good. I feel refreshed. I feel as if I am born again. Writing by itself is a luxury for me. When I write I forget myself. I forget my anxieties. I do not care what is around me. For the last forty five years I have been writing sitting in newspaper offices, in the road-side restaurants, on the crowded running local trains, and when my living space did not allow me to be by myself and write, I have written sitting in the bathroom. (i)

Vijay Tendulkar wrote his first story when he was six years old and wrote, directed and acted in his first play when he was eleven. Born on 6th January 1928 at Bombay in Maharashtra, Tendulkar had a colorful career. He was born and brought up in Kandevali, a small lane in Girgaon, in a lower middle class community dwelt. He spent his childhood in a typical chawl, in apartments of one room, kitchen, balcony and common toilets. His upbringing in such an environment provided him an opportunity to observe the life of middle class minutely which later on helped him to portray its different shades honestly.

His father Mr. Dhondopant Tendulkar was a head clerk at a British publishing firm called Longmans Green and Company (Now Orient Longman) and his mother, Mrs. Suseela Tendulkar, was a house wife. He had an elder brother named Raghunath and sister Leela. His two elder sisters died in infancy. He also had two younger brothers. He was a sickly child and was given the pet name ‘Papia’. In his childhood he studied in an average Indian municipal
school, without basic facilities. He relished those moments in comparison to the sophisticated school where he studied later in life. At the age of 9 he went to ‘Chikisaha Samooha’ where he found himself strange among other children and spacious buildings.

His father and his eldest brother were lovers of literature and the theatre of those days. Both of them used to write, act in amateur productions of plays and his father even directed plays in amateur groups where he used to take him as a child for the rehearsals. The theatre then was not considered to be a respectable profession and those who did theatre were looked down as wayward characters. Males acted the feminine characters. Little Tendulkar, watched them, in their male form with moustaches, getting into their characters with slightly overdone feminine gait and mannerisms in the light of a lantern. Later on this whole experience was described as a mystical one by him. He admitted that this was his first experience of theatre or the mystique of the Theatre which remained with him throughout his life.

Tendulkar started writing at a very early age of six or seven. He used to take a piece of paper, a pen and write stories. It may be said that creativity was inherent in him. As a child Tendulkar passed his time in a literary atmosphere with books and unpublished work of his father. At that time, he never imagined himself to be writer. He wanted to be an engine driver or an acrobat in a circus. He visited fairs and circus with his father and spent his vacations in family outings. He remembered his father as a disciplinarian, stubborn but an honest man. He was contented with his life, and never took bribes. Due to the strict principles of his father, Raghunath his brother quarreled with him and left home. His father was against the dowry system and so his sister Leela did not get married and had to remain single. It seems that his principles made his life miserable.

Apart from the influence of his father, Raghunath, his brother also played formative influence on Tendulkar. His brother was a follower of Gandhi and Gandhian principles. He
used to attend political Congress meetings. He wanted to marry Hansa Wadkar which was unbearable for his idealist father. The family separated from Raghunath and moved to Kolhapur. Later his brother died miserably due to alcohol. The later childhood of Tendulkar passed at Kolhapur, a princely state in Maharashtra. In those days his interest in theatre continued in some or the other form by writing, acting and watching plays, most of which were of an amateur quality. When he was 11 years old, he wrote, acted and directed 'Maya Bazar'. He used to discuss plays with a classmate who happened to be the son of a playwright and, therefore, Tendulkar considered him to be an authority on theatre.

In the early days of 1940s, when he was 13 years old, the family shifted to Pune and he attended a new school. He believed that he might have completed matriculation but the Quit India movement was in momentum and he obeyed Gandhi’s call to boycott school. He started taking part in campaign against Britishers. In 1942, Tendulkar distributed bulletins against the British Government. He attended meetings of ‘Lal Nishan Group’ (Navjeevan Sanghatana) and later attended the meetings of the communist party. At the age of 14 while attending such meetings, he was arrested and the family came to know about his participation in freedom movement. After this incident, he attended the school again, but now developed the habit of bunking classes and spending his fees in watching English films. The visuals of the films had a good impact on him. He remembered the visuals not the dialogues which he was unable to understand. These films taught him what visuals could do. In addition to films, he devoted his time to books at the city library which helped him a lot in his life.

At Pune, Tendulkar found the role model of his life Dinkar Balkrishna Mokashi, a radio mechanic but a good writer. He led a very simple life and Tendulkar was impressed by his personality and his writing style. His other role model was Vishnu Vinayak Bokil, a teacher and a writer. Later on Tendulkar, as a writer dedicated one of his books to this school teacher Mr. Vinayak. At 16, Tendulkar left school. He had no friends and no communication
with his parents. He put all his dialogues with his own self on paper. He thought that, he was ‘alone’ in the world. At this stage of his life his writing acquired a conscious motivation. He started writing for Newspapers. He wrote his first full length original plays ‘Grihastha’ at the age of 22. It flopped thunderously and he took a pledge not to write a play in his life, and today he had 28 full length plays to his credit and he has been in theatre for forty five years after that disastrous show. The reason is explained by the playwright in Preface to *Collected Plays in Translation*: "Any performing art is addictive. Once you get bitten by it you shall never leave dabbling in it. It is also endless learning. Learning by experimenting, by committing mistakes. There is no other way of being a performing artist – even a playwright" (xvii).

Tendulkar continued writing. He had been writing in different roles by using different mediums. He expresses his passion for writing when he says: "The point is, more than a playwright, I consider myself to be a writer – meaning I love to indulge in the physical process of writing. I enjoy this process even when there is nothing to say" (vii). Writing became a part of his existence. He had a colorful career—in a printing press, in journalism and as a public relation officer in a company. He had been sub-editor and executive editor in journals and Assistant Editor of a daily. While working as a journalist, he came face to face with the social problems. He was not satisfied with the ‘second hand’ information which he got, while sitting in the newspaper office. He was dissatisfied with this and became restless. This ‘restlessness’ was later on reflected in his major plays and no doubt it also shaped his vision and dramatic carrier. As Gouri Ram Narnarayan a points: "With his exposure to Marathi theatre from childhood and journalistic background, Vijay Tendulkar turned contemporary, sociopolitical situations into explosive drama" (qtd. in Dharan. Preface. xi).

Vijay Tendulkar also loved column writing. In 1993, during and after the destruction of Babri Masjid, he wrote nothing else, but columns for 6 months and enjoyed every minute
of it. These columns were the chief source of inspiration for ‘Ram Prahar’ a dramatic presentation. During his journalistic days he also wrote astrology columns when the official astrologer of the paper did not reach on time. He took immense pleasure and great efforts to forecast a bright or not so bright future of the faceless readers of the columns. He possessed the tendency to put himself into any role and write accordingly. He also did ghost writing in his lean days but even that was done honestly by him. He tried to write exactly like the person under whose name the writing was to be published or filmed.

He always liked to write in different roles- like that of the astrologer, the know all journalist, the eminent personalities under whose name he had to ghostwrite. He modulated his inner personality as a writer to suit the role, to make it look convincing and effective. At one stage of his career, he was writing plays and short stories and even ghost writing for additional income along with his job in a newspaper. He did public relations in an industry and wrote copy for ad agencies. He translated American books for the United Information Services and wrote scripts for non descript government documentaries. He unconsciously developed a style of writing which varied from role to role. He internalized each role and tried to play it as per its demands to perfection. Once he admitted that he considered himself an actor writer which meant he was an actor on the stage of his creative mind. He did not find acting on stage as exciting as writing. He believed that he acts as he writes. He emotes the lines of the character on the stage of his mind. He can perceive his characters talking and walking in front of his eyes.

Another factor that sharpened the edge of his writing was the tendency of curiosity for people. He unconsciously took notice of the speech habits and mannerisms of people. Later on these personal peculiarities of common people found expression in his famous characters.
utter chaos till he conceives it. He accepted once that he could never write a play with only an idea or theme in mind. He needed his characters first.

Tendulkar considered the structuring of plays a vital part for the total impact of the play. He believed that the success or failure of plays or films is mainly due to this factor in the script. He never read a book or attended any course to learn this skill. He had learnt it by trial and error method which was a costly method as experimental theatre was not supported by any financer or the government. By the time the mistakes were discovered and corrected, it was the last show of the play. Tendulkar made the rehearsal hall his learning ground as the numbers of shows that could be done were very limited. As no theatrical devices were used in rehearsals, the inner mechanism of a play with all its strong and weak points is mercilessly laid bare. He learnt a lot from these brain storming rehearsal sessions. Besides experimenting in the theatre and watching rehearsals, he saw plays. He saw at least one play daily and two or three plays occasionally. Sometimes the plays were good but most of the times they were bad. This exercise helped him in internalizing the technique of play writing as he mentally corrected the structures of the plays he considered bad.

In addition to performances of plays, he also did his learning by watching films because a film also has a structure and good films create their own structure. He was also hypnotized by the concerts of classical music without understanding its grammar. Classical music also has a strong structure, strict rules and regulations. The reading of poems also provided him a knowledge of compact structural form. He even learnt from fake but exciting wrestling bouts which were performed in Bombay regularly in the sixties. He discovered that, this excellent theatre of its kind had a strong theatrical aspect. He learnt his theatre from all this and more. He visited Art galleries for hours and found that good paintings also have their own rhythm, form and structure. A book by Peter Brook the master Craftsman in the art of Theatre taught him the foremost principle of theatre world – the importance of space, for all
visual arts including theatre. It is a creative challenge for the artist how meaningfully and ingeniously he fills the space. He was also influenced by western playwrights like Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and J.B. Priestly in particular.

1.3. **Vijay Tendulkar's Contribution to Indian Drama:**

Vijay Tendulkar started writing in the 1950s. India had won independence in the previous decade. It had a history of being under imperial rule for 150 years which had left its legacy in the form of institutions, educational systems, administrative practices and so on. The Indian society had to undergo a change – a change from being a bonded nation to an independent nation. This change was without any gradual transition, without any intermediate steps. When he started writing profound changes in every conceivable sphere of human existence were taking place, and so was his response, his creation of a world that he saw through his literature and theatre.

India’s emergence as an independent nation changed the scenario. This change was all encompassing – it was sociological, political, scientific, technological, ideological and philosophical. Different sections of society were awakening and reacting to this sudden change in diverse ways. India had undergone partition. She was getting industrialized rapidly. She was witnessing the violence bred by these two elements, alien to her experience so far. New classes – in fact the idea of ‘class’ itself – were being born. A major change was the emergence of the middle class and together with the caste and regional divides, had a bearing on the cultural expression. A new sensibility was emerging amidst all this turmoil. As is often the case, there was a crisis. It was a period charged with energy and creativity in all walks of life.
The literature and theatre reflected this. Indians had been already exposed to modern European theatre and literature. A few genres had stabilized and continued in the same vein for a few years even after independence. Most of the middle class theatre and literature was entertainment oriented. Around the 1950s, Indian literature and theatre in general, and Marathi theatre is particular, took a quantum leap. It discarded the decorative, entertainment – oriented, soft attitude that existed in the middle class commercial theatre. Makrand Sathe describes the scenario:

Modern Marathi experimental theatre was born, which lead to the Indian theatre as we look at it today. It was a theatre which had the courage to see reality in the face, it was socially and politically conscious, it was exposed to world literature and theatre, it was ready to try and evolve different forms to suit the content, also it was ready to shock and get shocked – in short, a theatre which was genuinely experimental and socio-politically valid. A movement evolved which has lasted till today. Vijay Tendulkar is justifiably referred to as the father of this theatre movement.(11)

Being born in a middle class family, Tendulkar inherited the values that go with it, but he did experience a world which is normally not part of a middle class person’s life. Some of the experiences that came his way were not his choice really – like dropping out of school, poverty and equally importantly, living in Mumbai as a youth permanently in search of a job. Mumbai – the commercial capital of India, which embraced industrialization and modernity very early. This brought to Mumbai – rapid accumulation of monetary wealth; poverty; ruthless competition of the modern capitalist; industrial, civilization; the violence emerging out of it in the common man’s life; class divisions and tensions; consumerism labor movements and unions; and rootlessness of people who came to Mumbai to earn their bread, leaving their families behind in small towns and remote places. The middle class insulated
itself from this reality and continued to live in their self created better world. Actually their lives got affected but they either failed to realize it, or preferred not to do so.

Tendulkar's experience as a youth on the streets of Mumbai and his career in journalism made him acutely aware of this reality in its starkness. He had experiences unusual for a middle class man. The reason behind this was that he never succumbed to inhibitions and tried to live a full life. His quality of meeting people, his ability to empathize with each and everyone, regardless of class, background was phenomenal. Tendulkar observed the changing scenario and this was especially true with regard to violence, ruthless competition and the power struggles of capitalist democracy that afflict modern life.

These themes haunted Tendulkar so much that when he was awarded the prestigious Nehru fellowship in 1973-74, he chose ‘the emerging patterns of violence’ as his theme for the project. Soon after the completion of the project, he said in an interview to that for two years he had ‘moved around the country alone, trying to look into situations ranging from individual violence to political movement; covering criminality, the functioning of the police force, the judiciary, jails and the political aspect of violence. At the end he was left with a, curiosity about violence – not as something that exists in isolation, but as a part of the human milieu, human behavior, human mind. It has become an obsession. At a very sensitive level, violence can be described as consciously hurting someone, whether it is physical violence or psychological violence . . . Violence is something which has to be accepted as a fact. It's no use describing it as good or bad. Projections of it can be good or bad, and violence, when turned into something else, can certainly be defined as vitality, which can be very useful, very constructive. So it depends on how you utilize or curb it at times. (Bandyopadhyay xli-xlii)
Thus, his perception of violence was very different. He considered violence as a part of human nature. This made him see the world from a unique point of view which played a major part in his writings.

As mentioned earlier, Tendulkar saw the reality, the new power equations developing in the 50s and 60s which remained untouched by the middle class writers. Earlier plays by many dramatists such as Khadilkar and Deval did indeed deal with socio-political problems but they confined themselves to imperial rule, age of marriage and others. However in the fifties, only the non-middle class politically aware activists like Annabhau Sathe and Shahir Amar Sheikh portrayed the existing conditions truthfully with all its inherent harshness, cruelty and exploitation. As Makrand Sathe observes: "Tendulkar was the first writer to make the urban, white collared, middle class take a note – with quite a bit of shock – of the reality as it existed, in its ‘bare-to the bone’ form. And his experiences, location–both geographical and temporal – and attitude played a role in this" (13).

Tendulkar saw through the naive optimism of the first generation of post-independence Indians who were expecting that India would as if, by magic, going to fulfill all the dreams conjured up during the freedom struggle. He foretold the violence that was inherent in the modern capitalist industrial society. His writing, therefore, came as a major shock for the middle class who certainly believed that violence was not a part of their world.

Tendulkar made the Marathi theatre ‘realistic in more than one sense. He moved the veil between the harsh reality and literature. He was one of the first writers whose female characters were ‘real’–with real emotions, sexuality, intellectual needs, striving for dignity and recognition. His plays like Kamala, Kanyadaan, Silence ! The Court is in Session, Shreemant, Sakharam and many others, portray women as victims of gender politics and male violence. He perceived undercurrents of violence and power in many institutions and
social interactions – as in gender power – struggle-like the media (Kamala), performance (Silence! The Court is in Session), family (The Vultures, Gidhade in Marathi), state (Ghashiram Kotwal), caste (Kanyadaan), and sexual mores (Sakharam Binder). He treated his characters with realism and empathized with them to such an extent that he transcends the barriers of ideology and righteousness. He does not relate himself to any ideology. In Introduction to Collected Plays in Translation, he explains his position saying that as an individual he gets affected by the existing state of the society and to relieve himself from the tensions and anxiety, he participates in a protest meeting or a dharna but,

As a writer I now find myself persistently inquisitive, non conformist, ruthlessly cold and brutal as compared to the other committed and human me.

The writer in me is more analytical than emotionally committed one way or the other. The writer in me raises inconvenient questions instead of choosing his side and passionately claiming there after that it is an always the right one . . .

As a social being I am against all exploitation and I passionately feel that all exploitation must end.

As a writer I feel fascinated by the violent exploited–exploiter relationship and obsessively delve deep into it instead of taking a position against it. That takes me to a point where I feel that this relationship is eternal, a fact of life however cruel and will never end. Not that I relish this thought while it grips me but I cannot shake it off. (Bandyopadhyay xliv)

Tendulkar was amongst the few writers who realized so vividly this violence and exploitation in Indian society. He not only saw it but also showed it to the world in the form
of a ‘Real life’. Most of his plays are in naturalistic writing. The play *Silence ! The Court is in Session* was a controversial play. After this play he was considered a rebel against the established values of a fundamentally orthodox society. *Encounter in Umbagland* is a political allegory. *The Vultures* shocked the conservative sections of Marathi society with its naturalistic display of sex and violence, *Sakharam Binder* is probably Tendulkar’s most intensely naturalistic play and shocked the conservative society even more than *The Vultures*. In *Ghashiram Kotwal* he moved from the naturalistic writing to folk tradition and explored the power game found in Indian politics. Kamala is based on a real life incident, *Kanyadaan* is also a controversial play and has been branded as an anti dalit play. It actually tries to reveal how idealism fails.

He wrote his plays in Marathi. First, he influenced Marathi theatre and then guided it. Later, his impact perpetuated to other Indian languages as his plays were translated into them. Tendulkar perceived the realities of the human society without any preconceived notions and wrote about them in his plays. He saw the violence and the exploiter–exploited relationship as ‘natural’ and ‘eternal’. He refrained as a writer from taking a position. His deliberate effort at objectivity prevents him from further exploration into the social and political institutions, and philosophic principals through which this violence actually takes place and gets perpetuated, creating an ‘unjust’ social system or custom. As a writer he consciously avoids transcending the limit of ‘objectivity’. This is a complex issue. Sometimes he has been charged that his vision is severely restricted and pessimistic. He ends up being non-sympathetic to the character he himself has created. His answer to this is,

(As for pessimism) my experience of my times, my life have shown me that the individual is largely disempowered, made abject, reduced to the role of spectator by the logic of certain events and social groupings . . . The history of human culture has taken very complex twists and turns. Yet, even today, my
inspirational strength lies in the hope with which I look forward tomorrow. I have consistently depicted the indomitability and grit of the human spirit in my writings. But I have never allowed that to lead me into drawing unreal, comforting conclusions. (qut. in Gokhale 31)

Tendulkar was a pioneer in many ways. He wrote short, realistic, simple and meaningful dialogues and liberated the Marathi stage from bombastic, ornamental and unrealistic dialogues. Initially he was criticized for using dialogues which comprised of unfinished and broken sentences but later on this style became a norm in Marathi Theatre so much so that the Marathi experimental theatre came to be known as a ‘theatre with broken sentences’. His dialogues suited the characters realistically rather than being theatrical. His commitment to realism persuaded him to use, what normally is called ‘foul language' and open reference to issues like sexuality against which there was a huge outcry.

There may be differences of opinion regarding Tendulkar’s position and views but there is none regarding his greatness as an author. His influence on the generations of writer after him and his mastery over the craft of his art in unanimously accepted. His literature, expressing concerns about violence and power seems to be relevant even today. As V.B. Deshpande, in his article "Vijay Tendulkar's Contribution to Indian Drama", points out:

Since the Independence – since 1950, to be precise–the name of Vijay Tendulkar has been in the forefront of the Marathi drama and stage. His personality both as man and writer is multifaceted. It has often been puzzling and curious with a big question mark on it. . . . Because of his highly individual outlook on and vision of life and because of his personal style of writing he has made a powerful impression in the field of literature and drama
and has given the post-independence Marathi drama a new idiom. By doing this he has put Marathi drama on the national and even international map. (18)


This legendary theatre man passed away on 19th May, 2008. He was suffering from Myasthenia gravis, a neuromuscular disease. He died at the age of 80 in a private hospital at Pune where he was hospitalized since 10th April, 2008. Since he was last discharged from hospital and had refused to go back to Mumbai. Shirish Prayag, Director of Prayag Hospital stated 'At the time of his demise he was extremely calm and quiet. There was an expression of contentment on his face. His face did not reflect any pain.'

According to his wish his last rites were performed at the Vaikanth electric crematorium and prominent theatre and film personalities including Mohan Agashe, Satish Alekar, Haider Ali, Amruta Subhash, Amol Palekar and Atul Pethe, University of Pune Vice-chancellor Narendra Jadhav paid last tribute to Tendulkar at the crematorium. Vijay Tendulkar has a son and three daughters Sushma, Priya and Tanu. His daughter Priya Tendulkar was a renowned cine artist and actress who also died in 2002. His wife Nirmala Tendulkar and son Raja Tendulkar died in accident in 2001 Vijay Tendulkar devoted his life for the world of theatre and literature.