Chapter-III

Themes and Conflicts in the Select Plays

Vijay Tendulkar, in Note on Kanyadaan in Collected Plays in Translation expresses his inner self when he confesses:

I have written about my own experiences and about what I have seen in others around me. I have been true to all this and have not cheated my generation. I did not attempt to simplify matters and issues for the audience when presenting my plays, though that would have been the easier option. Sometimes my plays jolted society out of its stupor and I was punished. I faced this without regrets. It is an old habit with me to do what I am told not to do. My plays could not have been about anything else. They contain my perception of society and its values and I cannot write what I do not perceive.

( Vijay Tendulkar Appendix IV 598)

3.1. Introduction

Plays written by Vijay Tendulkar are sharply focused and illuminating. Through his writings, he has laid bare the moral hypocrisy of an orthodox Indian society. Its established values have been undermined and challenged by his iconoclastic endeavors. He faithfully portrays the stagnated human lives in the mire of personal frustration and sexual innuendoes. He has always been amidst controversies because he has always been contemporary in his concerns - socially, politically and theatrically. He concentrated on the alienation of the modern individual belonging particularly to the middle class society. Kaustav Chakraborty in
his article "Introduction: Representative Playwrights of Indian English Drama" observes:

Thematically, his plays have ranged from the alienation of the modern individual to contemporary politics, from socio-political tensions to the complexities of human character, and from the exploration of man-woman relationship to the reinterpretation of historical episodes. The themes of gender relations, sexual norms, institution of marriage and issues of conventional morality have featured prominently in his plays. (6)

The themes which have engaged his frequent attention and have manifested themselves in his plays are: 1. Realism, 2. Socio-Individual tension, 3. Gyno-centrism, 4. Power practice and violence emerging out of it, 5. The conflicts aroused consequently, 6. A glimpse of hope - The humane aspect. These aspects have been dealt beautifully in the plays under study. The themes cannot be clearly demarcated as they co-exist, one giving rise to another, overlapping each other's orbit, supplementing and complementing one another. If asked to sum up in a single line- 'His plays are a description of plight of women in a male dominated urban middle class society.'

**Realism:**

Tendulkar's plays mostly have had their origin in his own personal experience. He once admitted that his play writing: "...begins with a germ or idea...sometimes just an incidence someone has narrated, or a person who has met me may be for a brief time but has left me guessing as to what kind of character he or she can be, or even a news item which I read in the mornings newspaper...can even be some other play" (Bandyopadhyay xlii).

The plays are not subjective as the real life incidents are treated quite objectively and the playwright, never seems to be intruding into his own work of art. He was a socially and
politically active human being, but as a writer, he consciously avoids transcending the limits of objectivity and firmly believed that fiction should stop at a given point. His commitment to realism never allowed him to offer any easy solutions for the conflicts. Consequently he has been charged of being pessimist and non sympathetic to the characters he himself created.

**Socio-Individual tensions:**

Vijay Tendulkar's presence was explosive in the Indian socio-cultural space. He once commented that everything that affects the society affects him and he never feels the real desire to escape it. The middle class moral hypocrisy that permeates nearly all the social dispositions and structure, disturbs him the most in this society. An individual's struggle for existence against the backdrop of a hostile society, is the theme which has fascinated Tendulkar the most. A subtle critique of modern Indian society with a distinct character and message, his plays have been perceived as being ahead of their time, but in reality, they have transcend all the barriers of time and space for the accurate and sensitive portrayal of the universal social issues.

He invades almost all social establishments, such as family, marriage, working place, caste and tries to hold them upside down in order to reveal the oppressive nature inherent in their discursive configuration. The mechanism of oppression which is present in every discursive field is critically engaged to trace the operation of power with a view to arrive at a rereading of the pre-established norms and traditions. He unmasks society at the varied levels of caste, class, gender in the realistic fabrics of his plays resulting in an encounter with the darker aspects of life which were safely kept hidden, giving rise to abundance of sex and violence and troublesome issues, which are politically incorrect to consider. Tendulkar opted for an anti-establishment and anti-institutional stance which earned him a lot of notoriety. Plays like *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972), *The Vultures* (1971) and *Kanyadaan* (1983) provoke
militant reaction from the audience which ranges from life-threat to hurling of shoe at him, but this definitely failed to disrupt the mission of this realistic playwright.

The select plays also deal with the complexity of human relationships- *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a social criticism. *The Vultures* is a ruthless dissection of human nature, revealing its basic vulturine instincts. *Sakharam Binder* explores the complexities of human mind, which has a natural inclination towards sex and violence. *Ghashiram Kotwal*, set in the late eighteenth century, recounts the power game played out in terms of caste ascendency in politics. *Encounter in Umbilical* is a political satire. *Kamala* is an indictment of the success oriented male society which is brutally ambitious. *A Friend's Story* is a stark commentary on the nature of both heterosexual and homosexual love. *Kanyadaan* explores the possibility of social change in India through marriage between two people of different castes and backgrounds.

**Family in Plays of Tendulkar:**

Family is an ideological state apparatus, which is intrinsic to social organization. Tendulkar has presented family not only as a site of women subjugation but also as the space where they will be destroyed inevitably. Reality of family becomes chaotic in his plays. This chaos in the institution of family is devoid of any potential for change. The family in Tendulkar's plays is essentially nuclear. The 'inner' or the 'private' domain is assigned to the women where as the public domain is reserved for man thus emphasizing the gender discrimination. Any analysis of gender perceptions has to be placed in the context of the ideological perception and representations of this social institution, as it is the prime site where the gendered subjectivities are constructed.

Tendulkar started writing in the initial decades of post independence era-an era when the hegemonic and dominant perceptions of family existed in our society. Tendulkar in true sense
was an 'avant-garde' who represented a perception which views gender relations as a function of the social, political, economic and historical environment. The most defining feature of avant-garde writing is a self critical awareness which is changed by a dynamic view of social change. The initial decades in the post-independence era represented a sort of passive revolution in which there was a coalition of emerging bourgeoisie and pre-capitalist feudal forces represented by a newly emerging nation state. The caste and patriarchal ideologies for the consolidation of its power were preserved and continue to exist. At the same time, there was also an attempt to create a counterpoint to the mind of Europe by positing an essentially religious, spiritualistic society which was traditional yet on the path of development.

Family was considered as the foundation of this nation state consequently, traditional notions of family were rigorously reinforced. The nationalists and revivalists stood at the same side as far as the invocation of traditional roles was concerned. Meanings of family (incidentally, the word comes from the Latin word 'familia' meaning 'household servants, family') offered an asymmetrical distribution of power between men and women. Family existed, not as natural, but as a political unit in that it interpolates men and women is different subject positions. This perception was rooted in the religious philosophy of Hindutwa which endorsed this asymmetry. In the famous play, Abhigyaana Shakuntatam, Kanva Muni's advice to Shakuntala illustrates the ideal behavior of a wife.

'As a wife, you must serve the elders in the family; must treat your co-wives as friends; even if your husband gets angry, you should not oppose him; you must never show pride over good fortunes; you must be always very modest and polite; a bride will be called a good wife only if she behaves so; otherwise she will be responsible for the downfall of her family name.'
Motherhood was put on a pedestal as a noble privilege. Women are offered the positions of spiritual reverences where as all practical power and authority lied in masculine hands. It is related organically with several other structures and apparatuses of dominance such as religion, caste, class, state etc.

Virtually family came to serve as an instrument for stability but in reality when the status of women was studied, one is astonished to see how gender inequalities were reinforced with devastating consequences for women. The patriarchal agenda was matched by the collusion of the capitalist and feudal forces through which unequal relations of power between lower and upper castes, working and capitalist class, men and women were maintained. The perception of the family was predominantly upper class, brahmanical and male. This was also reflected in literary creations. It was this omnipresent and intimidating domination of upper caste, middle class and male ideology in the perception of family that Tendulkar challenged in his plays. His characters hail from a wide range of social location; from lower and upper middle class and dalit castes, urban industrialized centers as well as tribal areas. Yet all of them debunk the myths about family as a place of security, comfort and protection. He presented a space for the alternative ideological perceptions which was a scathingly critical attack on the establishment.

Tendulkar's plays reveal the reality and presented the hierarchal power structure within a family in a way which differed completely from the established perception in the contemporary cultural texts. He essentially dealt with a world, which, in the guise of the modern ideal of nuclear family, rejected the women's independence as a citizen, enforced traditional Hindu-Brahmin norms of behavior, crushed her endeavors of attaining freedom and exercised a rigid control over her sexuality and productivity. On the contrary to the dominant ideology which perceived women as agents who produce various forms of domesticity necessary for the existence of the society, Tendulkar's women, at least Miss
Benare in *Silence!*, Sarita in *Kamala* and Champa in *Sakharam Binder*, figure as political subjects in direct opposition to and repudiation of their identity as female subjects.

Tendulkar's endeavors undermined the concept of family as an ideal social institution. This sometimes leads to a pessimistic streak in his plays presenting an ideological closure but it certainly compels one to experience the necessity of realigning the arrangements of this basic social institution.

**Social Inequality-Class, Caste and Gender:**

Vijay Tendulkar's plays, present themselves as an interesting area of study because of a realistic portraiture of different types of social stratification. The Indian society is dominated by caste stratification: "Castes are stable, clearly named groups, rigidly separated from each other, with hereditary membership and with little possibility of movement from one caste to another" (Trudgill 36). The plays of Tendulkar have revealed the nakedness of the manifold politics of casteism which is also a contributing factor to the sustenance of an oppressive structure of society. Plays like *Kanyadaan* and *Ghashiram Kotwal* are particularly illuminating in this sense.

As discussed earlier, the Indian society is male dominated - patriarchal in set up, consequently gender discrimination does exist. Women are judged by some stereotypical parameters created in contrast to the male in every sphere of life, including, language, behavior, even division of labor. These different kinds of hierarchal social stratifications bestow unequal distribution of power which give rise to conflicts on various levels in the plays of Tendulkar.

**Tendulkar's Male Characters:**

Tendulkar's male characters are placed more in sociology than in psychology. Where
Tendulkar's women characters are depicted similar to each other in being victims of chauvinistic oppressions, his male characters are differentiated by their class and social positions. Tendulkar depicts two groups of male characters as symbols of man's overt or covert hostility. They are differentiated by a few mannerisms of speech or body language and operate as a group. At one level, they embody man's hunting instincts, on the sociological level they are the members of the middle class which has appropriated itself to have the right of moral judgment over society and on the psychological level, they are some kind of failures, having a weak point in their respective personalities - in the real sense, they are powerless just pretending to be powerful.

**Gyno-centrism:**

Tendulkar's plays generally fall into a pattern that projects a woman both a provocateur and victim, and a somewhat marginalized observer confidante, who often doubles as narrator - commentator. Women, generally, are at the centre in his plays and most of the action revolves around them. The roles of Tendulkar's female protagonists overshadow the males figuring in them. The accusing finger of Leela Benare at the males in society in *Silence!*; the strong challenge to manhood embodied as Champa in *Sakharam Binder*; the dumb sorrow of Lalita Gauri, the victim of power struggle between her ambitious father and Nana Phadnavis in *Gashiram Kotwal*; the almost animal like screaming Manik and whimpering Rama in *The Vultures*; the agony of meekly suffering Jyoti in *Kanyadaan* - are some varied facets of Tendulkar's women characters. The dramatic action intensifies mainly because of the presence of these women.

He has assigned them different roles to play- very different from those played by women in traditional literature. In fact, in the entire history of Marathi drama, there was no
dramatist except Tendulkar who has depicted so many shades of female suffering. It is observed that Tendulkar treats his women characters with understanding and compassion where as the male figuring in them emerge as embodiments of hypocrisy, selfishness and brutal ambition. At some instants it is felt that the hundred year old Social Reform Movement against female subjugation has come alive in the literary presentations of Tendulkar's women. He has brought to life, some of the most convincing women characters in Indian theatre. His heroines are not romanticized, idealized, or forced to live by their creator's symbolic purposes. They are real—with real emotions, sexuality, intellectual needs, striving for dignity and recognition. They are first and foremost human beings of flesh and blood who draw their features from the widest range of observed examples.

Persuaded by his commitment to realism, Tendulkar never offers an easy solution to the problems of his women characters. They definitely are self assured, convinced, confident, dignified and aware of their self respect but end in pathetic situations which they do not deserve. Another noteworthy aspect is that, Tendulkar mostly present women in pairs. They are quite different from each other in behavioral traits, class and character, but underneath these superficial differences lie lives that resemble each other in the ultimate truth of being commanded by men, for their pleasure and under their laws. Tendulkar has created memorable characters, but it is his women, who on account of their unique position in society, have helped to reveal his social conscience, and it is they who emerge as the columns and beams on which he builds his structure.

**Power Practice and Violence** :

"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 space
in which these plays are played out" (Bandyopadhyay xli).

Michel Foucault defines power as 'the relationship in which one wishes to direct the behavior of another'. This practice of power gives rise to physical, psychological and emotional violence often resulting in the exploitation of the powerless. Tendulkar has accepted that as a writer he always felt fascinated by this exploited-exploiter relationship and considered it to be an eternal part of human nature. Violence arising on different levels and in different forms, as a consequence of power practice has been the axle of his plays. This resulted in Tendulkar's criticism for using raw violence to electrify the audience with horror. He has been accused of using sex and violence as instruments to create sensational plays.

The Points Conflicts:

As discussed earlier, the select plays are gyno-centric in which socially defined institutional body of power also exists. In other words, Power assumes an institutional body, its practice of power defined and determined within the parameters of that particular institution. In the plays under study the conflict arises when the body of the woman (the protagonist) and the institutional body of power come into collision, sparking off and calling forth varying intensities of violence. The female body challenges the executers of power, more interestingly the execution of power is just a strive for power and not a real exercise of power. It is this pattern that offers what Foucault would call "the point of articulation of the ethical preoccupation and of the political struggle for the respect of rights, of the critical reflection against the abusive techniques of government and of the ethical research which allows individual liberty to be founded"( Bandyopadhyay xliii).

This collision gives rise to conflicts on various levels -social, emotional, psychological, physical and gender power struggle. The female protagonists, driven strongly by an urge to assert their existence as an individual rather than a member of the 'second sex', throw a
challenge to the masculinity of the caretakers of patriarchy and become rebels. This self assertion leads to self annihilation of the female protagonist. Whereas, the male characters are governed by a strong urge of acquiring power, which drives them to cross each and every limit of decency, treading over humanity only to find out that the whole exercise was merely a pretence of power and not a real execution of it. This strive for power brings an inevitable destruction for them.

These deep lying undercurrents of power, violence and subjugation are brought to the surface by the master playwright. For this he has been criticized for exaggerating the spiritual bankruptcy of the degenerate socio-cultural milieu, accused of titillating the viewer with violence, sex and mental perversions and, worse, of promoting the defeatist apathy. But the other aspect is that he has also been acclaimed as one of the best playwrights of India.

**The Humane Aspect-A Glimpse of Hope:**

Tendulkar, unquestionably, explores the darker aspects of the human psyche but the ray of hope, the streak of light is not completely ignored. A glimpse of hope can be traced even in the darkest of his plays. Presence of characters like Samant in *Silence!,* Rajaninath in *Vultures,* Sarita in *Kamala,* Champa and Laxmi in *Sakharam Binder,* Bapu in *A Friend's Story,* Prannarayan in *Encounter-* endorses that the plays are not completely devoid of the humane aspect. These characters provide a positively different perspective through which the crisis in the plays can be looked at. The dimension, from where these characters look at the dramatic conflict, underlines the existence of a deeper vision apart from the superficial vision- a vision that never lose sight of the humane aspect as a resolution for the crisis and offers compassion, understanding, empathy and support as a remedy for the existing conflict.
3.2. *Silence! The Court is in Session.*

N.S. Dharan, in his article, "Vijay Tendulkar: A Unique Writer." makes a crucial observation:

. . . *Silence!* however, marks a change in Tendulkar's attitude towards his favourite subject i.e. the middle class man. For the first time in his dramatic career, he began to look into the psyche of his subject and focus his attention on the ugliness he detected there in. He has made every effort to carry on this psychological analysis of his characters, ever since. (94)

*Silence! The Court is in Session* (1967) was the first play of Vijay Tendulkar which became a part of the New India Drama phenomenon of the sixties and the first significant modern Indian play in any language to centre woman as a protagonist and a victim. It is a milestone not only in Tendulkar's career but also in the history of Indian drama. As already discussed, the plays of Tendulkar generally originates from his personal experiences. *Silence!* is no exception to it. In the introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of the English translation, Kumud Mehta points out that the play was born out of real snatches of conversation overheard by Tendulkar from an amateur group on its way to stage a mock trial in Vile Parle. This conversation amongst the actors gave him an impetus to write the play. He, thus, thought of locating a metropolitan group travelling to the fringes of society to organize a play based on the indictment of the American President Lyndon Johnson. The play, in spite of being a result of his observation is not subjective at all. He has treated the subject in quite an objective manner and has not interfered in his work of art.

Leela Benare, the leading lady of *Silence!* is a school teacher who is jubilant, lively, rebellious and assertive. She is a devoted teacher and commands the love and respect of all her pupils. She is also an enlightened social activist as she is a member of the amateur theatre
group called 'The Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association'. The other members of this group are the Kashikars, Balu Rokde, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik, Professor Damle and Rawte. Mr Kahsikar is the chairman of the association while Mrs. Kashikar is a housewife who follows her husband meekly. Balu Rokde is a college student who is taken care by the childless Kashikars. Sukhatme is a lawyer and Ponkshe is a clerk in the Central Telegraph Office. Karnik is an actor in the experimental theatre with pretensions of being an expert on 'intimate theatre'. Damle is a professor who plays a key role in the action of the play, though not physically present.

The association has to perform a mock trial against President Johnson for producing atomic weapons. Benare along with Samant, a local resident, are the first to reach the hall where the show is to be performed. Benare hurts her hand by mishandling the door bolt. Samant suggests her to suck her finger and tells her that if the bolt is not handled properly, one could lock oneself inside the hall and it does not open until someone opens it from outside, Benare feels wonderful in his company and says "... I like you very much" and that he is "a very pure and good person"(56).

Benare after this takes every opportunity to get closer to him as she enjoys his physical proximity. However ,Samant is totally indifferent to her and "perhaps as a response to his complete innocence, she moves away from him"(57). Benare describes her co-actors sarcastically till the arrival of the rest of the troupe. Benare's description of her colleagues is punctuated with shrewdness and sarcasm. She prophesies that Professor Damle, one of the actors in the troupe, will not dare to come saying that he is one "who prides himself on his book learning. But when there's a real life problem, away he runs !" (57, 60).

After some time the whole troupe arrives. Samant is awed by Ponkshe's sahib like appearance. He prepares himself to be at their beck and call and doing menial jobs for them
like buying tea, cigarettes, *pan* etc. Professor Damle's inability to join them on the occasion, and Rawte's absence due to his sudden illness make Kashikar worried about the performance. Sukhatme allays Kashikar's apprehensions by telling him that he will play the roles of both the counsel for the prosecution and that for the accused, for Rawte's absence, he recommends Samant as a substitute and this suggestion is endorsed readily by everyone. Mrs Kashikar suggests a rehearsal with Samant and asks for Benare's opinion in this regard who feels that a rehearsal of their regular play will affect its actual performance which is to come later. Sukhate agrees with her and suggests "a new and imaginary case against someone" so that Samant may understand how a court functions. He is quick to add, before Benare: "this is just a game" (71).

While arrangements are being made, Benare goes into the inner room, Karnik takes Ponkshe aside and, indicating the inner room into which Benare has just gone, asks him if he knows anything about her. This aside between Karnik and Ponkshe has a great dramatic significance as revealed later in the course of the play. At Sukhatme's suggestion, they all decide to frame Benare as 'the accused' in the trial. When Benare comes out, Ponkshe standing before Benare, declares :"Miss Benare, you have been arrested on suspicion of a crime of an extremely grave nature, and brought as a prisoner before the bar of this court" (74).

She stiffens at this, Kashikar comes and seats himself on the judge's chair on the dais. Karnik and Rokade bring the wooden dock arrange it around Benare. Sukhatme comes from the wings putting on his black lawyer's gown and sits. Kashikar, the judge, asks Benare : "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). On hearing this Benare looks stunned. All are silent and the atmosphere becomes extraordinarily tensed. Ironically, this so called illusive 'mock-trial', 'the play-within-the-play', slowly but
steadily grows into a serious affair, with the promise of some sadistic kind of pleasure to Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Rokde, Karnik and Kashikars, as discovered by the audience later. It is in this extraordinarily tensed atmosphere Act I ends and Act II opens with Kashikar repeating his question.

Benare stands numb holding on to a chair for support. At this juncture, Samant's entry lightens the atmosphere a little. He offers *masala pan* and cigarettes. There ensues a *pan* spitting contest. This comic interlude, introduced by Tendulkar, helps Benare regain her usual sense of gay abandon and confidence. Benare realizes that she has been baited by all these male aggressors. She has already incurred their displeasure by taunting each one of them, by exposing their pretensions. The mock trial begins, Gopal Ponkshe is called as first witness to whom Sukhatme inquires about Benare's marital status. Ponkshe gives an ambiguous answer that "To the public eye she is unmarried" (81).

Sukhatme, then, persuades Ponkshe to discuss Benare's private life and her moral conduct. He triumphantly makes Ponkshe admit that Benare is a woman who "runs after men too much" (81). Karnik, the next witness, reveals the fact that Rokde has seen Benare in a" compromising situation" (85). After this Rokde is called as a witness who provoked by Benare's comments, announces that he saw Benare in Professor Damle's hotel room.

Sukhatme's next witness is Samant who has been watching the scene enthusiastically to play the role of fourth witness. Samant is asked to assume that he reached to Prof.Damle's room half an hour after Balu Rokade had left, at this he objects and says that he had never been to Damle's room. Karnik, Ponkshe and Sukhatme try to convince Samant that all this is for the sake of trial and some things are being taken for granted. Karnik supplements that the crime itself is imaginary. Ponkshe, once again, ambiguously remarks that "Only the accused is real" (90).
Samant tries to give an imaginary response to Sukhatme's question by reading it from a cheap novel. Ironically, what he reads matches with what Benare has recently undergone in Professor Damle's room. He says that when he went to meet Damle, he heard a woman crying inside the room. The woman was saying to Damle that "If you abandon me in this condition, where shall I go?". Benare is tense. Samant continues that Professor Damle, a married man with wife and five children answered that he can do nothing for her and that he must protect his reputation. Samant says that at this, the woman threatened Professor Damle that she will kill herself "Bear it in mind that you will not escape the guilt of murdering two- two?" (92, 93).

A tense and stunned Benare, who was silent till that moment, suddenly asks Samant to stop, saying that "It's all a lie! A complete lie!" (93). She cannot bear it any longer. With tearful defiance she outrages "What can you do to me? Just try!" (94). A peculiar and cautious excitement breaks out on each face except Samant. Benare's sudden reaction mystifies them. Everyone present there by now has guessed about Benare's affair with Damle resulting in her pregnancy. Benare, who wants to leave, goes towards the door and unlocks it but to her horror finds that the door is locked from outside. Samant says that the door can be opened only from outside. This will happen only when the villagers come to see the 'mock-trial' which is to take place after sometime. Thus, Benare finds herself trapped and a claustrophobic atmosphere is built by the playwright. Benare's face reveals the terror of a trapped animal. From here onwards Benare decides to take refuge in silence. Karnik asks Sukhatme to 'fire away' his questions at Benare. Sukhatme, walking around in front of Benare a while, and suddenly pointing a finger. "Your name is Leela Damle" (97).

Samant at once corrects Sukhatme saying: "No - no - Be - na - re. Damle is the professor" (97). Sukhatme asks Benare her age to which she does not respond. The answer is given by Mrs Kashikar that she is about 32 years of age. The silence of Benare is considered
as contempt of court. Kashikar says that Benare is not less than 34 years and asks "How you come to stay unmarried to such a mature-such an advanced age?" (98). Mrs. Kashikar is called as the next witness. Sukhatme asks if she can give any information why Benare remained unmarried till such a late age. She replies "That's what happens these days when you get everything without marrying". Mrs Kashikar maliciously tells Sukhatme that after every performance Benare goes home with Prof Damle, a married man with five children. She goes on to add that Benare once made overtures to Balu too in the dark. At this Balu Rokde is called as witness. Meanwhile Sukhatme strolls over to stand near Benare and says in a confidential tone: "Miss. Benare, the game's really warmed up, hasn't it?" (99, 101).

Rokde, as witness, then tells the 'mock-court' that Benare held his hand in the dark and that he slapped her. After this Ponkshe enthusiastically asks Sukhatme to call him as a witness. Ponkshe, tells that Miss Benare sent him a note asking him to meet her at the Udipi restaurant. When he met her she tried to lure him to marry her. She told him that she was made pregnant by Prof Damle and he refused to marry her. She added that she always carries a bottle of Tick - 20 (poison) with her. Benare looks half dead. At this juncture, Karnik says that he wants to disclose something important regarding the case. When called as a witness he tells it was not Rokde who slapped Benare but it was Benare who slapped him when he refused her proposal of marriage. Another piece of vital information that he gives is that Benare had made an attempt at suicide when she had an unsuccessful love affair with her own maternal uncle at the age of 14. To this Kashikar says, "just one step away from total depravity" (111).

Benare struggles to her feet and tries to reach the door. Mrs Kashikar grasps her and forces her back to the dock. Now, Kashikar, the judge of the trial, wants himself to be examined as a witness. He tells Sukhatme, the lawyer for prosecution, that the chairman of Benare's school, Nana Sahib Shinde, has already decided to dismiss her from service. Benare
is shocked on realizing that she is going to lose her job the very next day. In sheer despair, she tries to swallow the Tick-20 she keeps in her bag. Karnik dashes forward and rushes it away beyond her.

Kashikar now resumes his role as the 'mock judge' and asks Sukhatme to plead the case as counsel for accused. Sukhatme, acting as the counsel for Benare, calls Prof Damle, Nana Sahib Shinde and Rawte as witness. All are absent. Then he asks for the permission to cross examine other witness which is refused by Kashikar. As the lawyer of prosecution, he requests Kashikar, the judge to mete out Benare the severest sentence possible and not to show her any mercy. But as defense counsel he only says that human beings are prone to errors and plead for mercy. Finding Benare's conduct unpardonable, Kashikar asks if she has anything to say. He gives her 10 seconds. What follows is a long monologue by Benare which has become a milestone in the history of Marathi theatre.

Kashikar the judge of mock trial says that the time is up and the accused has no statement to make. Now it is time for the verdict to be declared. He tells her that she has tried to dynamite social customs and the sacredness of marriage and motherhood, and hence, deserves no mercy. Her misconduct has endangered not only today's but tomorrow's society. The school authority is to be appreciated if they have decided to remove her from her job. No moment of her sin should remain for future generations. The court allows her to live but the child in her womb shall be destroyed. On hearing this cruel verdict Benare cries out in pain: "No ! No ! No! - I won't let it happen - I won't let it happen!" (119).

She comes sobbing to the stool meant for the defense counsel and sits down, half fainting. She collapses with her head on the table, motionless, and sobbing. Silence reigns the room now. At this moment, someone from outside opens the door, and two or three faces peer in. The first face asks if the show has already begun. Samant answers it saying the show
is yet to begin and asks them to come after five minutes. Meanwhile, Kashikar asks all others to get ready for the show. They are arrested by silent and serious Benare. They gather around motionless Benare saying that it was just a game and she has no reason to feel hurt. As they go into the inner room, Samant stands looking at the inert form of Benare and utterly overcome by feelings, he calls out her static figure, indistinctly. As she does not respond, he places the green cloth parrot in front of her and exists. Benare feebly stirs a little and then gives up the effort. The green cloth parrot is near her. Her own voice is heard singing softly from an indistinct place. Light focuses on Benare only. The rest of the stage is in darkness.

_Silence! The Court is in Session!_ ends in a pessimistic note. Benare loses her job, her reputation is stained and she has been given the verdict of infanticide. The play, being a typical 'Tendulkar one', explores certain areas making the play highly reflexive, 'An individual's struggle against the backdrop of a hostile society', Tendulkar's favourite theme dominates the play.

**Socio-individual tensions** : Written on the model of naturalistic drama, the integration of 'the play within a play' is an added dimension to _Silence!_ which often blurs the demarcating line between the reality and illusion. Paradoxically, this blurring unveils certain ideological questions. What would be out rightly objectionable becomes permissible in the aesthetic world of theatre. There is a toying with the idea of performance and reality 'which succeeds in exposing the double standards of bourgeois society and its failure of guaranteeing the right to equality. The interplay between the real and the fictional broadens the approach of the playwright. Whenever the situation becomes out of control, the pretext of fiction is resumed. Through the pretensions of play acting, the cruelty of society, the bourgeois conservatism and the inherent patriarchal attitude are manifested. Whatever the characters represent in real life and what they pretend to be, gets exposed through the proceedings of the mock trial.
The characters with their idiosyncratic behavior represent the middle class society in the microcosm. Here all the facades of the so called educated and enlightened liberal people like Kashikar, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik are torn to pieces, only to reveal thoroughly their brutal side. They exhibit the most inhumane behavior in the name of humanity itself. Miss Benare's personal life is laid bare by levying against her the charge of infanticide. Enough evidences can be collected from the text to prove that the selection of the charge of infanticide for rehearsal of the mock trial is not a random but deliberate move, with the aim of executing patriarchal domination. The play clearly exhibit the social stigma that prevails in a typical middle class society and all the members of the group is a miniscule cross section of the middle class society, the members representatives of its different substrata. The peculiar and perverse pleasure that the characters take in destroying Benare's self respect is a typical reaction borne out of middle class frustration.

A Challenge to Patriarchy: The Theme of Crime and Punishment: The play is a sharpened critical examination of the poaching instincts of men and the vulnerable status of women in general and of single woman in particular, under patriarchy. For the patriarchal establishment, the single women is thus seen as a source of potential sexual anarchy which is ready to poach on (as Damle does), but never ready to be forgiven. Sukhatme's ponderous argument "Na stri swatantrya marhati" (No women is fit for independence) uses Benare's instance to plead against female independence in general. Paradoxically, Sukhatme is both the counsel for the prosecution and for counsel for the accused, suggesting the pervasive presence of the patriarchal set up worldwide. The precariousness of justice within such a system where the defending lawyer and the judge hold similar views with the prosecution is underlined in such a dramatic gesture. All the witnesses he calls as a counsel for accused are absent and when the other witnesses are to be cross examined, the permission is denied. The other female character, Mrs Kashikar is also a victim of patriarchy. The patriarchal set up
empowers Mr Kashikar to humiliate Mrs Kashikar, every now and then and in front of
everybody but the case is never otherwise.

Benare tries to assert her social role by claiming her professional competence. She
says that in spite of the hardships she faced in society, she taught her students to be happy, to
see beauty and inspired them to be optimistic. And yet she is to be dismissed from her job
because she does not care for the social norms. She criticizes this veneer of culture which
hides any attempt to acknowledge desire and asserts that the discourse of desire is inevitably
linked to the body. She accepts that her life has been a series of unconventional experiences
which are branded by the society as forbidden. She experienced love twice, first when she
was fourteen years old, with her maternal uncle and second with Prof. Damle, a married man
with five children, as a grown up woman. Her first love was an incestuous love and the
second one resulted in an unwedded pregnancy. Both the time her experience of love turned
out to be a threat to bourgeois morality.

During the play, enough hints are given to suggest that Leela Benare is being targeted
for her refusal to accept the conventional institution of matrimony and for exercising
independent sexuality. She is not only condemned but is also penalized for the non-
conformism and independence she exhibits. Her open acknowledgement of the bodily desire
is an attack on bourgeois hypocrisy- a crime, a sin under patriarchy and the culprit has to be
punished undoubtedly. It is this non-conformist sexuality which threatens the world of
Kashikars, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik, et al and for which she has to be penalized. All the
characters who profess to be concerned with social issues and enlightening people seem to be
rooted in the medieval value system in Silence'. They deliberately promote an idol like figure
of women and would not tolerate any violation of that. Damle has devastated Benare
physically but others have devastated her mentally.
The play has unleashed the character of Leela Benare, who stands in collision with accepted norms and is punished consequently. However the punishment is anti climatic, the same court which accuses Benare of infanticide, of a crime against motherhood, allows her to live but orders the destruction of the child she is bearing. The society follows double standards, Benare loses her job, her private life is publicly dissected where as Prof Damle goes untouched and unstained, his social image, honor job all is intact.

**A Gynocentric Play:** The age old dictum of gender discrimination plays havoc in the minds of almost all the characters while judging Benare. Consequently, she is to be accused of immorality and promiscuity, not Prof Damle who has not only betrayed Benare but also his wife and children. No one considers him guilty, as if only Benare is responsible for what has happened. Refusing to follow the norms set by the male dominated society, she threatens the agents of patriarchy.

Mrs Kashikar, acting as a custodian of bourgeoise morality, is presented as a contrast to Miss. Benare. She participates whole heartedly in targetting Miss Benare, however, she herself is trapped in the patriarchal order. The only difference is that while she has internalized the middle class notions of morality and ideal feminine behavior, Benare openly challenges them. Mrs. Kashikar is content with the situation she is in and the kind of treatment she gets from her husband. By participating in torturing Benare, she establishes herself as an agent of patriarchy.

She follows the ways prescribed by the society. She also privileges her position as a married woman as she has a husband to fulfill her needs. This leads to a kind of hierarchy among women, the married woman being at the upper side, having social and economical security. They consider their married status as a symbol of power which unmarried women lack. Mrs Kashikar chooses to be an enthusiastic participant in the patriarchal system
because, if she is to retain a shred of self esteem, the least she must do is to glorify her own state. She will let down her own kind to establish herself on the right side of manmade social codes. Thus, a woman, trained to safeguard and perpetuate the system of patriarchy, is perhaps the most dangerous aspect of patriarchy.

**Power Practice and Violence:** Not only of Mrs Kashikar but Tendulkar also deals with the individual powerlessness of each of Benare's assailants at considerable length, each of them grabbing every opportunity to expose and humiliate another ganging up only to attack Benare. In this process their own powerlessness and the desperate need to assume a pretence of power in a group is exposed. There is a hidden sense of failure pervading their lives which is successfully exposed by Tendulkar-the childlessness Kashikars, Sukhatme as an unsuccessful lawyer, the non fulfillment of Ponkshe's dream to become a scientist, the false assumption of Karnik to be a successful actor and the inefficiency of Rokde to attain independent existence. Dejected, discontented yet daring, they behave cruelly towards one another revealing a sort cannibalism.

At one level the play becomes an array of violence-violence arising from the execution of power. The eagerness and enthusiasm with which Kashikar, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik and Rokde heap evidence after evidence against Benare expose the cruelty and violence latent in the male chauvinists. This also manifests the perplexing contradiction within human nature - its pleasure for hunt. Benare, who has been making mischievous remarks, personal comments, mimicking others, ends up by being ruthlessly baited and hunted by all of them. Her face revealed the terror of a 'trapped animal'. In such a helpless, hostile situation, she has no other choice but to remain silent. She becomes totally non co operative and refuses to utter a single word.

At this level, the play, as a whole, is a study of power operating as a silencing force,
the court pronouncing 'silence!', is itself a mechanism to silence the natural human drives and truths under the code of the legitimate. The actors playing the mock court room drama play with silence, straining to tear into the silence that Benare clings to and forcing her to go deeper and deeper into the silence-till she finds her fantasy of liberation in the long speech, the first break from silence. The plays of Tendulkar show a strong ethical concern exploring power, and violence as the natural instrumentality that power brings, Silence! is no exception to it. The violence that could be traced in the later plays of Tendulkar made itself felt in this play. The play exhibits a fierce psychological violence that is inflicted on a helpless woman. Through the delineation of these characters, Tendulkar has exposed the hidden sense of failure pervading their lives.

The play exhibits the theme of power, its sources and manifestations. Thus there are executers of power operating on various levels.

i) The prominent power play is between Benare and all the other characters except Samant. The mock trial is the game which has a peculiar underscore of power operating. Through this the characters fight for authority and power and try to trap each other but the ultimate aim was to punish Benare because of her pregnancy out of wed-lock.

ii) Then there is power of masculinity or gender inequality. The entire trial is fought in absentia. Tendulkar deliberately has taken care not to present Prof. Damle on stage. In fact, his absence is a metaphor for power bestowed upon masculinity, the exclusive power without any responsibility.

iii) As far as the pair of women is concerned, i.e. Benare and Mrs. Kashikar, the power division gets a little complex as it is no more a simple divide between male and female, the power structure becomes concentric and horizontal.
iv) Then there is Samant vs others executing the power of class, culture, education and economic background.

v) Then there is Mrs Kashikar openly getting scolded, every now and then by Mr. Kashikar. Mrs. Kashikar has never admitted, even to herself, that it is only on account of the sacrosanct institution of marriage that she is always on the receiving end of Mr. Kashikar's snubs and constant insults. He, by virtue of being a man and her husband, has a right to do so. Even then, she and others see him as caring husband as he has brought a string of flowers for her hair.

**Conflicts and Compromises:** Leela Benare's assertion, "My life is my own. . . . My will is my own. No one can kill those-no one! I'll do what I like with myself and my life!" (59), which does not conform to the familiar traditional and docile image of the 'Indian Lady', becomes the tragic flaw in her character and brings unforgettable agony for her. Her behavior comes under scrutiny because of her assertive and aggressive tendency which has long been associated with masculinity.

Benare who wants to assert her existence as an individual and not as a woman, as a sexual class, fails to perceive that she can never attain the dominant position, being a member of the second sex, in a society that culturally and ideologically privileges men and places power in their hands and serves male interest at the expense of women. This is also unconsciously accepted by her when she recognizes the fact that her child, "must have a mother . . . a father to call his own-a house-to be looked after-he must have a good name!" (118). Consequently, she tries to compromise with her situation and proposes men like Ponkshe and Balu for marriage, even after knowing that they, in no way, are an equal match for her.

**The Humane aspect:** Samant's non participation in the execution of cruelty and violence
towards Benare creates the space of possibility where human sympathy can exist. While others leave Benare with the usual justification of, "it's a game! That's all."(119) Samant is profoundly disturbed. His discomfort is played upon by Tendulkar in the concluding stage direction in which his initial gesture of leaving the room with others signifies his parity with the rest of the group in judging Benare as guilty but his return to her and offering the toy parrot gently and affectionately and above all, 'with great respect' opens up the possibility of re approach, sympathy and acceptance towards her.

Though the play cannot be considered radical in the sense that Benare's revolt against patriarchy could not change Sukhatme's concept of 'No women is fit for independence' but is radical in the sense that it provokes audience for a rational self reflection. Benare asserts, "I haven't hurt anyone. Anyone at all! If I've hurt anybody, it's been myself" (58) but what about Prof. Damle? What if his wife and five children come to know about the whole episode? Will Mrs Damle be brave enough to point an accusing finger at Mr Damle or will she be silenced like Benare under the influence of patriarchy? Neither of the option puts her in a winning situation. Damle who has betrayed seven people has not been referred as culprit even once by anyone, not even by Mrs Kashikar. This compels the audience to question the established social norms which are accepted and obeyed unquestioned in their day to day life. It forces them to become a critic of the society by questioning their own views about it.

_Silence!_ not only exposes and criticizes the middle class hypocrisy of being enlightened and liberal minded but serves as social document of discrimination done to women. It is not that the people are unaware of the fact that how brutally women are treated in the society but no one bothers to change the situation. The play raised the issue of gender discrimination about fifty years ago but the present scenario is not much different though some positive changes have definitely occurred. Even today, the newspapers are so full of atrocities against women that people have become used to it and such news items leave them
indifferent. To seek attention or to cry for justice, it has to be 'a rarest of rare crime' otherwise everything is acceptable—be it honor killing executed as penalties given by Khaap panchayats or a mother being tortured for giving birth to a girl child. What else to comment, if the government has to run campaigns which urge people to 'save girl child' in the twenty first century.

It is the society which asks everyone to conform to its own yardsticks of decorum and propriety. That is why it took four hundred years for women to take their first step inside the renowned Shani temple that too after having a constitutional right of equality which proves that the unwritten laws are more powerful than the written ones. The play has highlighted the hollowness of middle class moralities-moralities, which may have slight variations but at all times and all ages has remained the same. An individual is not supposed to take the "Primrose path of dalliance" as Shakespeare puts it. Conform or else—the hell can break loose. Irregular or abnormal behavior is not to be tolerated. The play reminds one of Shelly's quote: "I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed" (Shelly: 296).

3.3. The Vultures

The Vultures (Gidhade), the play produced in 1970 and published in 1971, was actually written fourteen years back. Originally, it was written before Silence! but it faced censorship problems and remained shelved for several years. Some years later, when Satyadev Dubey and Dr Shriram Lagoo wanted to produce it for Theatre Group, Tendulkar found the manuscript in tatters, "so I had to rewrite the entire play" says Tendulkar, speaking to Arun Sadhu. (Bandyopadhyay xIviii). The first production of this play was compared by Girish Karnad to the blasting of a bomb in an otherwise complacent market place. The production and publication of Gidhade made Tendulkar's name associated with sex and violence.
Arundhati Banerjee in Note on Kamala, Silence! The Court is in Session, Sakharam Binder, The Vultures, Encounter in Umbugland in Collected Plays in translation observes that: "The play is a ruthless dissection of human nature revealing its inherent tendencies to violence, avarice, selfishness, sensuality and sheer wickedness" (575).

The plot of the play was constituted by the open display of scenes of violence and illicit sexual relation which challenged the social decency of the conservative Maharashtrian society. It was not that the theme of violence was being dealt for the first time by Tendulkar. He has already explored this theme earlier in his play Silence! at a psychological level but this time he went a step ahead to expose the execution of violence at a physical level through the interactions among the members of a family. Samik Bandopahyay's observation in this context is worth quoting:

The violence in The Vultures is played out in a different kind of entrapment, not the chancy, accidental kind that comes with a defective lock, but a conventionally/socially determined entrapment, viz that of the family. Blood and a common, shared history give its collective a stronger and more ruthless power than that exercised by the amateur theatre group in Silence!. (xIviii)

The Vultures is set in a morally collapsed family structure and the theme of violence, decadence and degeneration in human beings is explored from this perspective. Intensely morbid in the portrayal of its character and action, the play reveals the dark side of human nature and depicts its inborn vulturine instincts of greed, selfishness, wickedness and violence. Man's natural inclination for the macabre, the pervert and the violent are a sort of vulturine instinct. The vulture hidden in the recess of a man's personality cannot be suppressed by any amount of social conditioning. Tendulkar has used the idiom 'vultures' to describe the members of the family who exhibit all the baser aspects of human nature that one
would prefer not to see. Shubho Ray in his article "Vijay Tendulkar's *The Vultures*: An Interface between Feminist Critique and Existential Angst" opines that:

*The Vultures* talks about domestic violence and is perhaps Tendulkar's darkest play. . . . The image of vultures clawing at the weakest in their brood is powerful and morbid. *The Vultures* that showed up man's bestiality in its most savage manifestation, where a family driven by the lust for money, transforms itself as metaphorical vultures-tearing each other apart. (103)

First staged at Tejpal Theatre, Mumbai, on May 29,1970, *The Vultures* is a two act play with seven- member *dramatis personae*: Hari Pitale-the pappa in the play, Sakharam-his brother, Ramakant (Ramya) and Umakant (Umya) are his eldest and second son respectively, Rajaninath- his youngest and illegitimate son lives as an outcaste in the garage outdoors, Manik- his daughter and Rama- his daughter in law.

Act I, scene I of *The Vultures* begins with the specification of time as, "Time: any time" which signifies that 'time' is not an issue for Tendulkar but theme and characters are. The description of their home as "A house that reminds you of the hollow of a tree,"(201) further underlines the title of the play, as all the members of the Pitale family except Rama and Rajaninath, are an embodiment of the vulturine instincts. Their interrelationships are hopelessly degenerated. The only aim of their lives is to search inhumane tricks to cheat others and get some money by hook or crook. Rajaninath is a man with poetic sensibilities who, like a chorus, comments on the characters and incidents through his poems. The play begins with his poem describing Rama as: " A statue of emotions chilled to stone. / Alive, she followed after / That living death, her master," (201).

Rama is the 'a statue of emotions chilled to stone' and her husband, Ramakant, is 'living death'. Hari Pitale (Pappa) and Sakharam, his brother had jointly established a
business in the name of 'The Hari Sakharam Company' but when the business flourished, Hari Pitale deceived his brother, literally throwing him out on the streets. He grabbed all the property in such a clever way that Sakharam was defeated even in the court of law and could never rise again from his helpless condition.

Thus the foundation of the edifice of Hari Pitale is greedy and deceitful. This extreme loveless individualism is also inherited by his children and a moral and spiritual vacuum has been created among them. Justifying the title, they all form a family of vultures. Ramakant and Umakant hate each other and they both hate their sister Manik and the three hate their father. They all prefer money to their relationships. Living in an air of complete disbelief, all the family members except Rama and Rajaninath, are ready to betray one another to get more money and they do not even hesitate to kill one another to get huge share in property. The gradual collapse of the family is led towards a definite crisis because of the extreme antagonism felt by the two sons towards their father and vice-versa. Having been brought up in an atmosphere of betrayal and deception, Ramakant and Umakant have no respect and love for their father.

When Ramakant, Umakant and Manik get a clue, from their uncle Sakharam, of Pappa's hidden bank account they turn extremely violent. They get him dead drunk, the two brothers then feign a fight, with Pappa in the middle and all the three fall to the ground. They attack him with tin opener and soda bottle. Pappa gets badly injured, terribly frightened he prays pathetically, "Please don't kill me! I'm your father, you pimps! your father!"(230). Ultimately he yields and writes a check. He gets respite only after giving up the secret bank account. Ironically, what he had done to his brother, comes back to him.

Equally disgusting is the relationship among the brothers and the sister. For Manik, her brother Ramakant is "Ramya, the swine, the hypocrite" and Umakant is "Umya-that
miser, that lick penny! . . . bloody ruffian!" The way Ramakant and Umakant talks about her when she was in the bathroom taking a bath is completely disgusting. Umakant even threatens her that he will break down the bathroom door. When she comes out aggressively, wearing a blouse and a petticoat, having a towel wrapped round her shoulders, Umakant hitting her on the buttocks, says:

UMAKAKANT. [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? (215)

This conversation among the brothers and the sister is completely obscene. The Raja of Hondur is the person, who is in love with Manik and has made her pregnant. Ramakant and Umakant plan to demand twenty-five thousand by blackmailing him: "Otherwise, bloody publicity! Uproar in the bloody newspapers!" (236). To prevent Manik from informing the Raja their foul plan, they go to the extent of breaking her leg so that she cannot go out. The moment they come to know that their plan has failed because of the sudden death of Raja by heart attack, their extreme frustration brings them to the diabolic conclusion. They decide to abort Manik.

Ramakant immediately promises: "Come in. I'll give such a kick, he'll fly up to the bloody skies" (248). Then, in a moment, the animal like screams of Manik are heard. She has been kicked and aborted by her brothers. Pappa is shown laughing. The appearance of Manik, wearing a white saree which has become red because of blood, trying to escape with her
broken leg, has been claimed as one of the most violent and repulsive scene ever shown on the Marathi stage.

This barbaric action is later on retaliated by Manik with still greater revengeful vehemence. She ruthlessly rubs the mixture of lemon and ash on pregnant Rama's belly and tries to abort the child. After executing her revenge, she erupts with a terrible and hysterical outburst of wild joy.

In the given scenario of emotional bankruptcy, moral degradation and economic strain, Ramakant and Umakant fight for a larger share in property. Umakant asks Ramakant to transfer the house in his name. Following the tradition of betraying one's brother, Ramakant tells Umakant to get out of the house. Angry Umakant discloses that the child Rama is bearing, is of Rajaninath. Ramakant is so enraged by the disclosure that he decides to abort Rama.

Pappa, after being disillusioned by his legitimate sons, asks Rajaninath to take revenge on them. He promises Rajaninath to make the will in his favor. Detesting the idea of inheriting the property, Rajaninath mercilessly asks him to get out. Rajaninath and Rama are in sharp contrast to those of the other members of Pitale family. Rama's situation worsens day by day. Her inability to become a mother keeps on tormenting her. Ramakant keeps on taking her to Swamis and Sadhus but she is tired of 'sacred ash, ash of incense' and by 'a new mystic, a Swami, an astrologer, a doctor' everyday. Rama feels that her womb is sound and healthy and the fault is in her husband's excessive drinking. She shares her agony with Rajaninath, the only human in the family of vultures. The sensitive poet suffering from the negligence and agony of being an illegitimate child empathizes with the anguish of Rama. She develops a relationship with him and becomes pregnant. She is later on aborted( it is not clear whether by Ramakant or Manik). Pappa, Umakant and Manik, are turned out of house
one by one. Ramakant becomes a pauper in the end. Rama continues to live a barren, pathetic and dependent life. She follows her husband meekly when he leaves the house in order to escape from creditors. The play ends pessimistically with the following lines by Rajaninath:

    The tale of the five vultures
    Had this end.
    The story of men accursed.
    Or else of vultures cursed
    To live their lives as men. (265)

The play ends here.

Tendulkar's world is one where sex and violence dominates the human relationship. Like *Shantata!, The Vultures (Gidhade)* also had its origin in a real life incident and was a part of Tendulkar's personal experience. He was so moved by the experience that even the names of the characters were left unchanged by him. He wrote the play within the short span of four days and called it a cathartic process. The unpleasant subject of the play is indicated by the title itself. The play is dominated by the ferocity, ruthlessness, avarice and cunningness of the vultures inherited in the members of the Pitale family.

**Family as a site of violence:** Tendulkar has made clear in his Preface that the play is an attempt to place the whole truth in all its nakedness. Family, the basic social institution, has been shown as a place of violence and exploitation. The notion of family as a unit of security is debunked with ruthless candidness as family itself is presented as the site of violence. The violence portrayed in *The Vultures* is different as it is executed in close personal relationships. The members of Pitale family assumes inhumane scavenging proportions to
such an extent that no one can trust the other. This is quite evident when Manik says that she survived the typhoid she had last year only because she, "just refused my medicine. I wouldn't even drink water. That's what saved me. I never slept. Even in the dark, I never closed my eyes for a second. That's how I survived. Or you'd have fixed me long ago!" (208).

The violence inflicted on a father by his own children, the cruelty with which Manik's leg is broken and even a doctor is not fetched and in this very condition, she is ruthlessly kicked and aborted by her own brothers are the incidents that show the extents to which men can go to satisfy their greed. The vultures feed upon the dead but this family of human vultures inflicts suffering on the people who are alive. Maya Pandit in her essay 'Representations of Family in Modern Marathi Plays: Tendulkar, Dalvi and Elkunchwar' elaborates:

With Gidhade, Tendulkar's vision of the family became more violent. Here he went one step ahead to demonstrate the bestiality and monstrosity of people in a family living in a nauseatingly consumerist world. The family of Ramakant, Umakant, Manik, their father and uncle and the illegitimate son of their father represents the decomposing state of the family where even the outward facade of decency has evaporated and what remains to be seen is the naked play of desire to possess, own, gain money and destroy another human being. (71)

**Cultural Degradation** : The play is an array of moral and cultural degradation. The only motto of the members of this family is to exploit the other members for maximum economic gain at any cost. This is reiterated by Tendulkar by the range of the individualistic representations based on the ideas of violence, greed, spiritual and cultural erosion. He seems to be conforming to the Marxian theory that the economic aspect of society is the
ultimate determinant of other aspects. Marx further argues that "what we call 'culture' is not an independent reality but is inseparable from the historical conditions in which human beings create their material lives; the relation of exploitation and domination which govern the social and economic order of a particular phase of human history will in some sense 'determine' the whole cultural life of the society" (Ojha 141). The limitless greed for money has created a sort of moral and spiritual vacuum among the members of the Pitale family.

**Gynocentrism**: As discussed earlier, it is Tendulkar's specialty to present his women characters in contrasting pairs. The pair presented in *The Vultures* is Rama, the docile wife of Ramakant, an immortal creation for the Indian stage and Manik, Ramakant's sister, who is presented as a foil to Rama. This pair of women is in a bolder contrast than the pair of Leela Benare and Mrs. Kashikar in *Silence*. Rama is subservient, polite, traditional, pious and timid where as Manik is provocative, rude, unconventional, irreverent and seditious. They have the contrasting traits of black and white.

**Patriarchy**: In spite of having contrasting traits their fates are not at a contrast to each other. They both are presented as a victim of patriarchy. The ill fate that they go through has its root somewhere in patriarchy. Ramakant and Umakant, Manik's brothers keep on fighting with each other but stand united when it comes to her. Similarly, Rama, 'the statue of emotion chilled to stone has been portrayed as an ideal, traditional Hindu housewife who has 'dogged loyalty' for her husband. Her submissiveness is even exploited by Manik who treats her as a maid servant but conditioned by orthodox society that taught her not to confront the in laws even when they are wrong and atrocious, she never retaliates.

**Gender**: Tendulkar's positioning of women has been claimed to be pessimistic even though the theme of gender discrimination is the dominant motif in most of his plays. His audience feels that the women characters have been violated as a consequence of functioning outside
conventional norms and countering orthodoxy. Shubho Ray opines: "In fact, Modernism in Indian Theatre was spear headed by Vijay Tendulkar as his plays challenged the establishment and the unequal power relationships between the two genders"(103). Rama's character has shown a gradual progression but at the end she has been presented as succumbing to the pressures within the family. She is shown asserting "The true companionship" when she leaves the house with Ramakant: "To a leper / Of a mangy dog / On the road to hell" (202).

Violence and Power Practice:

"Violence in The Vultures operates in a series of axes-sons against father, brothers against sister, brother against brother, each leading to an exile from home, followed by a series of returns/reversals, the exiles attempting to avenge themselves"(Bandyopadhyay xliviii)

Tendulkar admits that it is sheer violence that characterizes the play. He confesses being himself shocked at the violence in The Vultures and says in a revealing documentary 'Tendulkar and Violence - Then and Now' by Atul Pathe (produced by the California Art Association) "For three days and three nights the play consumed me. When I finished it, it was as if a raging fever had subsided. I couldn't figure from where did this all come to me. I was a middle class man with its culture and security and yet I wrote that play (qut. in Ray 118)". As one turns over the pages one cannot but feel shocked at the way the violence has been portrayed. The diabolic characters and the sordid theme of violence is further reinforced by the lurid play of light effects and the screeching of vultures.

Points of Conflicts and compromises: Tendulkar's sensibilities have been shaped with an acute observation of individual's psyche and social realism. M. Steiner, in his Transactional Analysis of Post-Freudian School of Psychology explicates the six basic maladies of any
culture. They are: sex role scripting, inequality, powerlessness, joylessness, mindlessness and lovelessness. Vijay Tendulkar has successfully defined these deformities in *The Vultures*. In this play, he has created a drama emerging out of an interplay of the circumstances which create these maladies, the human beings involved in them and the problem itself. As a consequence, violence-physical or verbal- is there as a part of the functioning of characters, rather it becomes an inevitable part of the human existence which is over flooded by totalitarianism, consumerism and materialism. This, in turn, gives rise to selfishness which fetches lovelessness and compels one to resort to any gross atrocity. "The instinct of selfishness," Suresh T. Kharat rightly observes, "is the foundation of lust, aggressiveness, violence, cruelty, wickedness, lie, deceitfulness, greed, treachery, hypocrisy, corruption, envy and so on" (qut.in Ojha 142).

As the play is built on conflicting situations, the condition of victimization prevails throughout the play. All the members of the family literally hate one another but are trapped by cultural constraint and economic limitations into an impossible coexistence inflicting all sorts of corrupt and violent ways on one another. Being exceptions in the family of vultures, there are Rama and Rajaninath, who with their succumbing moral selves fail to assert themselves. The fact that their lives are connected with 'the vultures' and this encounter between the agents of the opposing qualities give rise to a conflict of great dramatic significance. There is, also, the mental anguish of Rama who is an amalgam of conflicting traits-struggling between emotion and intellect, espoused ethics and inconsistent actions, physical desires and conscience. In short, she strives for independence with her submissive nature.

**The Humane Aspect:** The only humane aspect in the play is the relationship between Rama, the wife of Ramakant and Rajaninath. She finds a temporary solace in the tender relationship with him. The view of the playwright is quite relevant to be quoted here:
In *Gidhade* it is the pack of human vultures pitched against a defenseless female character, the wife of Ramakant. In *Shantata!* it is Miss Benare against a pack of middle class vultures. In *Gidhade*, Rajaninath, the bastard brother, suffers for the defenseless female in the play. In *Shantata!* it was the character of Samant who did it for the psychologically- mauled Miss. Benare. (qut. in Bandyopadhyay xlix)

She shares her agony with Rajaninath, the only human in the family of vultures. He understands her plight and a relationship is developed between the two. Rama becomes pregnant by Rajaninath. This relationship has been interpreted as incest by some critics but it is just a natural consequence in the given scenario, as Arundhati Banerjee comments: "Her (Rama's) illicit relationship with her half-brother-in-law, Rajaninath, who is a bastard and an outcast from the family, may raise a few conservative eyebrows and evoke questions of morality, but one has to admit that it is the single genuine and humane relationship in the context of the whole play" (576).

**Conclusion :**

Vijay Tendulkar had been asked why *The Vultures* raised the same issue as in the earlier play *Silence!*. Tendulkar answered that his moral and psychological adolescence was devastated by the direct and indirect experiences that went into the making of *The Vultures*. Later, he began to feel stabilized and did not feel the rude, raw shock as he became used to the vulture in man and has accepted violence as an inseparable part of human existence.

*The Vultures* begins with the specification of time as, "Time: any time", which signifies that the violence and greed presented in the play are not limited to the precincts of time and space; they are ubiquitous and never ending. A social critic with merciless gaze, Tendulkar has depicted the ailments of modern society. The six basic maladies referred
earlier are still relevant as far as the contemporary society is concerned. This fact is also endorsed by the presence of persons like Indrani Mukherjee who has weaved a network of complex family relations and has been accused of the murder of her own daughter, proving that the cultural degradation and materialism have seeped deeply in the social fabric. Such cases prove the farsightedness of the playwright and assert the relevance of his vision in the present scenario. As far as *The Vultures* is concerned, the contemporary audience felt the directness of appeal but would not acknowledge it and, Vijay Tendulkar, the man, did not go for any compromises on the issue.

3.4. *Sakharam Binder* :

First staged on 10 March 1972, *Sakharam Binder* is probably Vijay Tendulkar's most intensely naturalistic play. Tendulkar has always drawn his characters from the real life and Sakharam is no exception to it. The play is about Sakharam, a book binder and his strange life style. The bold portrayal of characters, the controversial subject and exhibition of violence and sex stormed the stage. Soon after the play was produced, a critic commented that, 'For many decades no play has created such a sensation in the theatre world of Maharashtra as Vijay Tendulkar's Marathi play *Sakharam Binder.*'

Tendulkar has stated in an interview that the play has grown around the central character Sakharam, a Brahmin by birth but is an antithesis of the general idealized conception of the member of that caste. Sakharam, a book binder in a press was born as a Brahmin but never followed a single code of conduct of the caste he belongs, rejects all the social norms and lives his life on his own terms. Having been ill treated by his father, he ran away from home when he was only eleven. He "grew up like a cactus-out in the open" (172)
and considers himself as his own master. He is foul mouthed and rough in manners. Tendulkar calls him "A coarse but impressive personality" (125). In his article 'Muslim and I', Vijay Tendulkar describes that Sakharam is unmarried male, unmarried partly because of his limited source of income and also because of his complex personality of basically being a loner. Sakharam is frank and outspoken, and his rough idiom is the right vehicle for the values he has evolved for himself. He tries to work out an independent philosophy of life, with no sense of false obligation. He is a man who has discarded the established norms of a decent society and has challenged them in words as well as in action. He has no social taboos. He drinks heavily, has no sense of guilt and admits all his vices. Hinduism in him-V.S Naipaul observes-has been reduced to a belief in honesty and a rejection of all shaming actions.

Sakharam's world is an entirely different kind of world. He is the autocratic ruler of his little house in a lower middle class locality. A disbeliever in the institution of marriage, he brings home cast-off women who have been driven out by their husbands-lock, stock and barrel. He needs the woman in his house to fulfill his sexual needs and to take care of his house hold. It is a kind of mutual contract which is not marriage. This contract ends as soon as one of the two decides to end the adjustment and calls it a quit. In this relationship, there is a code of conduct to be observed by the woman till they cohabit. Whenever the contract ends he gives the woman a *sari*, a *choli*, fifty rupees and a ticket to the place where she wants to go. He makes his code of conduct known to every new woman he brings home before she decides to stay with him. Thus, he has spent fourteen years with six women. The play begins when the sixth has died and he brings the seventh woman, the typical Indian woman, Laxmi to his house. Explaining the code of conduct to be followed by her, he says:

> If someone calls, you're not supposed to look up and talk. If its 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. May be I'm a rascal, a womaniser, a pauper. Why may be? I am all that. And I drink. But I must be respected in my own house. 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)

From Sakharam's conversation with his real friend Dawood Miyan, it is informed that he has brought Laxmi from a Dharmsala in Sonavane. The audience also come to know that Dawood is well acquainted with Sakharam's life style. Sakharam loves his mridanga and chilum. He plays on his mridanga after having his heart filled with ganja and then he falls into a trance. The other aspect of this aesthetic man is that he treats his women quite cruelly and violently as discovered later in the play.

Laxmi is portrayed as a typical ideal Indian woman who is quite religious, submissive, docile and sympathetic. She is strongly theist in nature, a staunch believer in God. As its unacceptable for her to stay with a person without wedlock, she starts considering Sakharam as her husband and wears a mangalsutra of his name. Laxmi is compassionate, she loves crows, pets a black ant at home. Sakharam warns her that her religious fasting should stop, for she will need all her strength to serve him. Soon she learns to adapt in her new environment. Sakharam at times treats Laxmi quite violently. When a burning charcoal falls on her feet, he just leaves her to suffer the agony. She often gets beaten up by him. Strangely enough, spending an year with Laxmi brings some inexplicable changes in Sakharam. He admits, "Haven't I been drinking less this year? . . . Last month I had ganja just twice . . . I bathe every morning, and then I sit here for my puja . . . Don't I wear clean clothes now a days? . . . I did listen to you, didn't I?" (148)

Fed up with Sakharam's violent behaviour, she replies, "And you beat me in return.
And cursed me and tortured me." Enraged Sakharam shouts," Then why don't you go? When you're forced to lead a dog's life, you'll come to your senses."(153) and decides to send her out. Laxmi goes to her nephew at Alamner. Sakharam, after her departure, confesses to Dawood that, "There have been many women here, but this one left a mark before she went away."(153)

A sort of reversal of actions occurs in Sakharam's life after Laxmi has departed. So far he had been the master of his household and the women residing there followed his commands but the arrival of the eighth woman, Champa, turned the tables against Sakharam. She is younger than Laxmi, better built and beautiful than her. Champa is the wife of a police fozdar who has been sacked from his job for drunken irresponsibility. Sakharam brings home the women who are cast off by their husbands but Champa is the woman whose husband is cast off by her. Sakharam, in his usual vein, explains her the code of conduct to be followed in the house but she remains indifferent to it. Sakharam is so infatuated by her body that despite of threatening her of bodily harm, he cannot raise a single finger against her. Dawood also finds her irresistible and she also appreciates him.

Champa, only after having drunk heavily, satisfies Sakharam's 'itch.' Sakharam shirks his duty to get drunk and extract maximum pleasure from Champa's drunken and motionless body. When fozdar Shinde, Champa's husband and a masochist himself, comes fully drunk looking for Champa and begging her to kill him, Champa beats him badly. He is shocked at this but he forgets that he has treated his women in the same way. Dawood is also shocked and warns Sakharam, "Watch out, this bird is different from the others. God, what a woman" (168).

The warnings of both Laxmi and Dawood come true in Sakharam-Champa relationship. Tendulkar probes deep into man-woman relationship in this play. Sakharam is
helpless because of his 'appetite'. His ill-treatment of Laxmi and his slavery to Champa proves this fact. Laxmi, driven away from her nephew's house, comes back to Sakharam. Her nephew's wife has accused her of theft. As she has nowhere else to go and has accepted Sakharam her husband returns to him. Sakharam, enraged at this, beats her and tries to turn her out. Champa intervenes and convinces Sakharam to let her stay saying, "She can help me in the house. Anyway, I can't cope with the house and with you . . ." (184).

Laxmi keeps her religious fervor unabated. She sleeps in the kitchen. Her chanting of 'Sitaram' at night, disturbs Sakharam's drunken love making. The mysterious disappearance of Champa in the afternoons rouses Laxmi's suspicion. Curious, she follows her to discover that she is having an affair with Dawood. She prays to God in which her true relationship with Sakharam is revealed, "I couldn't keep the man I married. For me this one was my husband. I worshipped him. Even when I was away, I'd worship him in silence every day . . . if I have to die, let me die on his lap- in full glory like a married woman. . . ." (187).

Laxmi feels pity for Champa's husband, fouzdar Shinde and feeds him. Champa, when comes to know this becomes enraged and warns Laxmi not to double cross her. The presence of Laxmi has a tremendous effect on the relationship of Sakharam and Champa. In scene 5 of Act III, the conflict between them reaches its climax. Champa refuses to satisfy Sakharam's sexual needs. When compelled by him, she says that she didn't mind it as long as he was a man. A heated conversation takes place between the two and Champa shouts," you're not a man-not since she came. She's made an impotent ninny of you. Don't have the guts to take me before her. You turn into a corpse-a worm" (193).

Sakharam beats and compels Champa to take more and more liquor. Then he goes to Laxmi and orders her to get out. She tells him that she'll leave the house only after telling what she has been yearning to tell him. She discloses to Sakharam that Champa is having a
clandestine relationship with Dawood. He is enraged and rains blows on her and drives her out. In blind fury, he rushes to Champa and chokes her to death. Champa is murdered by Sakharam. While all this happens, he is unaware that Laxmi is present outside the house.

Sakharam is shaken by the thought that he has murdered Champa. All his strength leaves him, he is frozen completely. Laxmi comes and takes over the situation. She tells him to bury Champa in the kitchen. Finding that Sakharam is too dazed to dig the grave, she summons all her strength and starts digging herself. At the same time, fouzdar Shinde arrives and knocks at the door. Laxmi asks Sakharam to keep quiet. Fouzdar Shinde's voice becomes fainter and fainter while Laxmi continues digging with all her strength. The play ends here.

Tendulkar was accused of deliberately choosing sensational themes of sex and violence in Sakharam Binder to shock the audience and to get publicity. The play is full of abusive language and contains at least five bedroom scenes; Act I-scene V and VIII, Act II-scene III and V, Act-III-scene V. V.M. Madge comments in Sakharam Binder: An Unwitting Deconstruction that:

Sakharam Binder was staged first on 10 March 1972. Following The Vultures (1970) which had ruffled middle class sensibilities a bit, the play confirmed Tendulkar's image as a radical and iconoclastic dramatist. There was quite a storm with regard to the raciness of dialogue, the 'bold' portrayals of characters like Sakharam and Champa, and especially Sakharam's lashing out against the hypocrisy of people. (128)

Here is Vijay Tendulkar, the man, once again targeting the middle class hypocritical mentality and challenging the norms of a decent society. There was so much agitation after the play had been staged that Kamalakar Sarang, the director of Sakharam Binder has published a book on the storm that raged after its staging.
With reference to Sakharam, he shares his views with Gouri Ramnarayan in an interview and says: "An individual becomes fascinating in moments of strong self assertion. Take Sakharam Binder, the man. He is violent and therefore reacts strongly to the situation. He doesn't care about what happens afterwards. He stands upright and says 'This must not happen. I will not allow it' whether he is right or wrong is another matter" (Madge-171).

**Realism:** People like Sakharam do exist in society as Tendulkar has derived his character from real life. In Preface to *Collected Plays in Translation* he describes how Sakharam, an incident heard was transformed into the memorable character of Sakharam Binder:

> . . . But I was once told about a man who worked as a binder in a printing press in a small town and lived a strange kind of life. He did not marry but was on the lookout for a woman who was thrown out by her husband whom he brought home and stayed with her till one of the two got fed up of the other . . . Caught my imagination. Occasionally I would narrate what I had heard to friends. While narrating inadvertently - and sometimes knowingly - I kept adding imaginary details to the original version. I began describing him in more and more details. . . . I suddenly felt that I can make this man breathe, I have brought him to life, and he will be my central character in a play which I shall write. And I wrote the play. (xx)

**Socio-Individual Tensions:** Tendulkar has achieved a total objectivity in the characterization, not only of Sakharam but also of Laxmi and Champa, avoiding all kinds of moralizing judgments. Through the delineation of Sakharam, Tendulkar has explored the manifestations of physical lust and violence in human beings. Sakharam is crude, violent and aggressive apparently but is honest and frank. This openness of his personality becomes in itself a criticism of the hypocrisy of the middle class. Sakharam ridicules the double
standards of the middle class. As Arundhati Banerjee comments in the Note in *Collected Plays in Translation*: "One of the reasons why there was such a reaction against *Sakharam Binder* was its burning naturalism. Here was a raw chunk of life with all its ugliness and crudity which was more than a shock to refined and prudish middle class audience. Such a direct confrontation with 'vulgar' reality was difficult for them to bear" (579).

*Sakharam Binder* has an explosive subject matter about man-woman relation and about the institution of marriage. In fact Vijay Tendulkar had to face litigation and he fought a court room battle in respect of *Sakharam Binder*, the main objection being that the play would jeopardize the sanctity of the institution of marriage. Sakharam is a bitter critic of the institution of marriage and the play is full of his sarcastic utterances like: "...the husband-he's a proper swine! He ties her down; he doesn't get tied down himself! He flits around again-a freed bird!" (130), "...those fellows-they can't father a brat and they take it all out on their wives. Beat her, kick her every single minute of the day. They're an impotent lot! For them the woman's just dirt, that's all" (129) and "Mention your husband's name and your eyes begin to brim over with tears. He kicks out of the house; he is out to squeeze the life out of you. But he's your God. You ought to worship a god like that with shoes and slippers! He should be whipped in public. God, eh?" (133).

The contractual arrangement followed by Sakharam represents a replica of the marital arrangements where all the romance and glamour of marriage evaporates under the critical eyes of Vijay Tendulkar. As Maya Pandit observes in "Representation of Family in Modern Marathi Plays: Tendulkar, Dalvi and Elkunchwar:

"*Sakharam Binder* was yet another play in which Tendulkar revealed the political meaning of the institution of family. Though Sakharam proclaimed that his house represented an alternative to marriage, actually the system is
just like marriage shorn of all the romantic trappings. It is interesting to note in this context that the censor board had refused to issue the play a certificate on the ground that it lowered the sacredness of the institution of marriage, that it aroused the passion of dogs and pigs and even that it showed a Hindu wife who assaulted her husband in spite of his divine rights.(68)

**Gender and Patriarchy:** The pattern of thinking instilled in women by Patriarchy is manifested by Laxmi's calling Sakharam her husband and elevating him to the rank of God. Sakharam, Laxmi and Champa, all are shown as victims of familial ideology. Both the women are without male support. Laxmi has been abandoned by her husband and Champa has abandoned hers because of his atrocities. Laxmi has been presented as a counterfoil to Champa. Laxmi fits into the socially accepted and approved mould of good woman and a good wife where as Champa is more like the socially despised, temptress, the rebel who does not want to be governed by social norms. When her husband comes looking for her she abuses him and beats him badly. Laxmi who is a blind follower of the patriarchal value system criticises Champa for ill treating her husband and sees her death as a sort of divine retribution. Laxmi and Champa thus represent the two poles of feminine response to patriarchy. Laxmi believes that all transgressions from the male-ordained norms are taboo. Sakharam flaunts his unconventional way of life but is himself shocked at the way Champa treats her husband because violence, abuses and foul language are the male's prerogative.

**Themes of Sex, Power and Violence:** Though presented as a disbeliever in the institution of marriage, Sakharam's ideological perception of his relation with the women he keeps in his house is not at all different from that of a regular husband. He insists that he is the master of the house, the king and his commands should be obeyed by the woman he is providing shelter to. His physical and sexual needs must be satisfied as a duty in exchange for the protection he is providing otherwise who would have kept the woman in the house. He believes himself to
be the giver and the woman, the receiver of his obligations. "Once a woman is thrown out nobody calls her respectable. Remember that I at least took you in," (147) he tells Laxmi. When looked at from Champa's point of view, the situational compromise is," . . .What else can I do? Go out in the streets? Face half a dozen animals everyday! easier to put up with this one"(181).

Thus sex, violence and power is an indispensible part of this contractual arrangement- sex as a cost of the so called security provided to the woman and violence as a means of manifesting power.

**Points of Conflicts:** Tendulkar's main focus has always been on the middle class, lower middle class in this case and its suffocations. The suffocation primarily arises because of the conflict between the individual identity of man and his social existence, the harmony and the disharmony between the two. Tendulkar weaves a matrix of intricate interrelationships between his characters. He has also probed deep in to the human mind and its complexities. These intricate interrelationships and the complexities of mind give rise to conflicts at various levels.

1) Sakharam, in association with Laxmi, becomes religious and domesticated. But when he comes in contact with Champa, he gets transformed into a sensuous, lewd drunkard who is dominated only by the thoughts of sexual enjoyment. The presence of religious Laxmi and seductive Champa at the same time and at the same place puts Sakharam in a conflicting situation as the two different strands in his character come into direct confrontation, creating a psychological turmoil in him and resulting in his temporary impotence.

2) The relationship between Laxmi and Champa is extremely complex. When Laxmi comes back to Sakharam, Champa does not anticipate any possibility of being insecure as she is
confident of her own sexual attractions. She pities the homeless woman and convinces Sakharam to let her stay in the house. The two women have a mutual consent to satisfy the different needs of the man they shared -- the one his domestic, the other his physical needs. Yet, there is a touch of contempt in Champa's behaviour towards Laxmi -- the contempt of a stronger person for a weakling.

3) The dramatic conflict arises when Sakharam asks Laxmi to leave the house, who has not yet revealed the affair of Champa with Dawood to him. She decides to use this opportunity to malign her rival and discloses the secret, hurting and challenging Sakharam's masculinity. This brings out the latent hatred in Laxmi for Champa. The consequence of the conflict is the strangling of Champa by outraged Sakharam.

**The Humane Aspect:** Tendulkar's characters are manifestations of the complexities of human mind. They are painted neither black nor white but are colored by varying shades of grey. All the characters in *Sakharam Binder* are combinations of good and evil, weakness and strength, humane and inhumane tendencies. Sakharam, apparently crude, aggressive and violent is governed by his own laws of personal morality. He is self assertive, honest and frank. He is loyal friend and, at times, treats his women quite compassionately. Laxmi, an embodiment of the ideal Indian woman, is compassionate, religious and hard working but turns out to be vicious when her own survival is threatened. On one hand she is presented as a tender hearted woman who takes care even of ants and crows but on the other hand she is an accomplice of Sakharam when Champa is being murdered. The third major character Champa, brazen and sensuous, shows a strange kindness when Sakharam beats Laxmi. Champa pulls Laxmi away and stands between her and Sakharam saying, "Hit me"(183). Thus the play is not completely devoid of the humane aspects.
Conclusion:

As discussed earlier, Tendulkar faced litigations with respect to *Sakharam Binder*. The main objection was that the play would jeopardize the sanctity of the sacrosanct institution of marriage. The play presents a situation where a man and a woman live together under the same roof not tied by wedlock but under a contractual arrangement where either of the partner is free to move out of the contract when fed up with each other. This arrangement of living together without marriage echoes the modern trend of Live-in-Relationship.

Tendulkar foresaw the possibility of living together without marriage in 1972 which now a days is becoming a trend flourishing particularly in metropolitan cities. The young generation of 21\textsuperscript{st} century has accepted this alternative arrangement which is devoid of any social obligations or religious rituals. Tendulkar presented a disillusioned version of marriage which offers no security to women but the alternative suggested is also not an ideal one. This fact is asserted when recently a famous T.V actress committed suicide and her live in partner was arrested and held responsible for her death.

3.5. *Ghashiram Kotwal*

*Ghashiram Kotwal*, the most acclaimed and equally debatable play of Vijay Tendulkar, was first performed on 16 December 1972 at the Bharat Natya Mandir by the Progressive Dramatic Association in Pune. The play won several awards in 1972-73 at the Maharashtra State Drama Competition. *Ghashiram Kotwal* came up against resistance soon after it had turned into a stage success and was banned by the President of the Progressive Dramatic Association after nineteen performances. Supporting the decision, the executive committee of the Association passed a resolution and objected to the play on the following
grounds: (a) it was anti-Brahman (b) the character of Nana Phadnavis, a cult hero, as conceived by the playwright was not historically correct; and (c) there was a strong possibility for the play to be abused publicly and to face a revolt by enraged audience.

Most of the actors resigned from the association and formed Theatre Academy on 27 March 1973. The production was revived on 11 January 1974 and has been subsequently performed by the group. The Academy has successfully performed the play internationally in France, Germany, UK, the Netherlands and Italy. In spite of the controversy around it, the play is a huge success all over India not only in its Marathi production by the Academy but in other Indian languages also. Actually the plot of the play has been borrowed from history and is set in a backdrop of late eighteenth century Maharashtra. Tendulkar was criticized for showing, Nana Phadnavis (Balaji Janardan Bhanu), the late eighteenth-century Marathi Machiavelli who was the Peshwa's Chancellor in Pune, the royal deputy's deputy, in an unsavory light. Ghashiram was an official of Nana Phadnavis.

*Ghashiram Kotwal* is not a new theme for the Marathi Literature. In Moroba Kanhoba Vijaykar's book *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1873), the moral depravity of Brahmins through the character of a Brahmin scholar is depicted. Ghashiram is not an imaginary character of literature. In New History of the Maratha, G.S Sardesai has written about Ghashiram as a historical figure. Tendulkar's play is not so much about the historical personages of Nana or Ghashiram, but about the way in which power operates through social institutions of caste and religion to create and destroy people like Ghashiram. It exposes the brutal nature of power game where people are used as pawns.

The play is named after its central protagonist 'Ghashiram', an ordinary, simple Brahmin from Kanauj, who comes to Poona to try his luck. Spurned, hurt, humiliated and victimized at Poona, he vows to take revenge from the whole city. The victim turning into a
victimizer- the theme that interests Tendulkar the most. The play is a study in violence, rage and the corrupting influence of power in an anti- Brahmanical background. This the reason, why the play has been labeled as anti Brahmin. Samik Bandopadhyay states in a Note to Ghashiram Kotwal, that when he asked Tendulkar, did he really conceive the play as an expose of Brahman corruption and pretensions, or as a study of the power game in more general terms, Tendulkar answered:

It is rather difficult to go back to the point when I thought of writing this play and recollect everything what happened to me on the conscious and subconscious levels. Broadly speaking, I had in mind the emergence, the growth and the inevitable end of the Ghashiram; also those who create, and help Ghashirams to grow; and the irony of stoning to death a person pretending that it is the ends of Ghashirams. The rest just happened; or if that sounds pretentious, happened at a subconscious level. The decadence of the class in power (the Brahmans, incidentally, during the period which I had to depict) also was incidental, though not accidental. (587)

Broadly speaking, the play is the story of the rise of Ghashiram Savaldas from anonymity to the powerful position of the Kotwal of Poona, his inevitable fall and his gruesome end. The play opens with a chorus of twelve men standing in a line, swaying to and fro and singing. The play is inaugurated by an invocation of Lord Ganpati, Goddess Saraswati and Laxmi who appear one by one dancing on the stage. The chorus sings and prays for the success of the play in the tradition of Greek Drama.

The song is followed by the appearance of the Sutradhar who introduces them with the emphasis, 'These are all Brahmans from Poona" (362) and asks them about their professions. They reveal themselves to be a, 'Vedantic scholar', 'Vaidya doctor', 'logician',
'astrologer', 'linguist' and 'a baron' who have come from different places. Sutradhar's interception with the Brahmins who sneaks off in quick haste in order to go to Bavannakhani, the red light area, reveals that despite their scholarly professions they are adulterers. The impatience and the arrogance with which they answer the Sutradhar's questions, the abusive words they use to address him, reveal their inherent baseness and lewdness.

The Brahman curtain is transformed into a group sitting in Gulabi's hall in Bavannakhani. Here, Ghashiram is introduced, 'Sycophant', 'ludicrous', dancing with Gulabi. The Brahmans hum, "It's like Mathura. Bavannakhani . . .", whistle and throw their turban in air. They shout, "We want the Brahman/ brahman-wife dance . . ." (367). Gulabi and Ghashiram reappear as Brahman and Brahman - wife and sing lavani and dance. The sutradhar tells that while the adulterous husbands are away, their adulterous wives open their doors for their Maratha lovers. He then informs the arrival of Peshwa's chief minister, Nana Phadnavis is at Gulabi's place- a collective vision of corruption of sex in politics and religion. Nana, with silver- handled walking stick and garland of flowers on wrist, comes through the opening to a tabla rhythm. The chorus sings: "Radhakrishna Hari, Govinda Murali, Ramashiva Hari, Mukunda Murari . . ." (369). While dancing Nana hurts his ankle. Ghashiram looks at Nana's hobbling, bends to the injured leg making Nana put it on his back. Pleased with Ghashiram's servility Nana offers him his pearl necklace as a reward. Ghashiram does not accept it. He introduces himself to Nana as a Brahman from Kanauj. Nana leaves in his palanquin throwing the necklace to Ghashiram who deftly catches it. Later on Gulabi snatches that necklace from Ghashiram saying, "I hired you as a dancer. That's why you could get as much as a glimpse of Nana's shoes. I should have that necklace" (371).

Ghashiram is beaten, assaulted and humiliated by Gulabi's men. Meanwhile, the palanquin of a white man arrives. The ceremony of the giving of royal gifts to the Brahmans is going to take place. The Brahmans run after the English men and ask for money for
sneaking him into the ceremony. This reveals their greedy nature. The Sutradhar describes the deplorable condition of Brahmins. In the crowd of Brahmins, Ghashiram also presents himself for dakshina as he is a Brahmin too but his identity as a Brahmin is questioned by the soldiers.

Coming back from the ceremony, a Brahman suddenly yells that somebody has stolen his prize money. Ghashiram is charged of the theft. He is beaten and dragged by the soldiers. At the background the chorus chant, "Shri Ganaraya . . . Shri Ganaraya . . . " The Sahib, the English man says that the theft has been done by someone else and he has seen it; but the soldiers do not listen to him and put Ghashiram into the cell. He is deeply hurt, humiliated, his self respect wounded and his reputation gone. To his dismay, sutradhar informs that the police is equally involved in the crime and hope for justice is a false notion. The police is brutal and apply third degree treatment on the prisoners and that : "The thief is a simple thief./ The police are official thieves" (376).

Released from the cell, he is thrown into the audience by a soldier, while on stage Brahmins, Brahman women, Gulabi, the Maratha lovers stand and look down on him. The soldier who flings him down abuses him and warns not to come back to Poona otherwise "you'll lose your head" (376). Ghashiram feels humiliated at this assault on his self-respect. He is a Brahmin from Kanauj and hence an alien for Poona. He knows that Poona Brahmans are not going to accept him as one of them. He will not be accommodated by the hostile Brahmans of Poona who have already vent their spleen on him. But, he is not going to be intimidated. Out of disgust and contempt, enraged Ghashiram challenges the city of Poona :

But I'll come back. I'll come back to Poona. I'll show my strength. It will cost you! Your good days are gone! I am a Kanauj Brahman, but I've become a Shudra, a criminal, a useless animal. There is no one to stop me now, to mock
me, to make me bend, to cheat me. Now I am a devil. You've made me an 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. Then I'll be Ghashiram again, the son of Savaldas once more. (377)

After this he dances a war dance on the forceful beat of mridanga. The Sutradhar appears as kirtankar. The attention shifts to Nana Phadnavis who comes in dancing and holding a flower in his hand. Nana ogles the women and smells the flower. The Sutradhar as a Haridasa—a special kind of religious story-teller-singer-sings an abhanga. Nana leers at women. The abhanga changes to lavani—a change from a religious song to a love ballad. Nana looks unblinkingly at a pretty girl. He becomes lustful and asks the girl to sit on his lap. Totally drawn to her, he chases her. She escapes him. Nana in blind lust grabs the servant at the door, who is no one but Ghashiram in servant's dress. The lower part of his face is covered with the end of his turban. Nana is furious to discover that the girl has escaped. He is obsessed by her. Ghashiram promises that he would bring the girl back to him.

Later on Nana is shown dancing erotically with the girl. Every now and then, Ghashiram is seen. Seven or eight women of different ages, all Nana's wives, make a dancing circle around them. Ghashiram walks into the audience and laughs viciously: "Look! I've given my beloved daughter into the jaws of that wolf! Look. Look at this father. Putting the child of his heart up for sale. Look at my innocent daughter—a whore. That old overripe bastard! Look at him, eating her like a peach . . . Spit on me. Stone me. Look, look, but I will not quit. I'll make this Poona a kingdom of pigs" (381).

Ghashiram has served her daughter to Nana, for he wants power—the power that Nana is capable of investing to him. He barters his daughter Lalita Gauri for power. The Sutradhar comments that Nana could not think of anything except her. He asks him to bring his
daughter one more time. Ghashiram denies doing so. Overtaken by lust, the helpless Nana asks, "Then what can I do?" Grabbing the opportunity, Ghashiram proposes: "All right, Sir, to shut people's mouths, make me the Kotwal of Poona" (383).

Stunned by the audacity of Ghashiram, Nana persuades him to suggest some other arrangement. But Ghashiram is adamant and in sheer helplessness, Nana says, "Bastard. You've got me in a narrow pass." Ghashiram replies, "Yes, the narrow pass of my only daughter" (384). This conversation has sexual overtones, a lustful politician degrading himself before a power-crazy man by raising him to the great office of Kotwal of Poona. Nana knows that his defeat is temporary, for he, in a soliloquy shows his Machiavellian strategy and says gleefully:

Go, Ghashya, old bastard. We made you. We made you Kotwal. Raise hell if you wish. But you don't know the ways of this Nana. This time, there are two bullets in this gun. With the first one, we'll fell your luscious daughter. But with the second we will make the city of Poona dance. Ghashya, child, you're a foreigner. . . . As a countercheck to all those conspirators. You'll not be able to join them; they'll never trust you even if you do. Because you're a stranger, you're an outsider. We just raised a dog at our door to the position of the Kotwali! . . . What'll happen is that our misdeeds will be credited to your account. We do it; our Kotwal pays for it.(385)

Act II opens with the Sutradhar's announcement that Ghashiram has become the Kotwal of Poona. Ghashiram, to execute his revenge over the city, impose illogical orders to subdue the public of Poona. He started making the rounds of Poona at night and ruling in person. He whipped and arrested people. Imprisoned and sued them. The Sutradhar sums up the situation, "Gauri orders, Nana does, Ghashiram rules", "All of Poona loses heart" and
"They are compelled to be moral." Ghashiram calls Poona an 'adulterous city' and says, "All of them, to the last man, whoremongers, fuckers-I'll straighten them out."

A chaos is created in Poona and public rage gets accumulated. Nana, indifferent to public resentment, is shown busy in the celebration of Rangpanchami. Nana is busy in his own festivities. Ghashiram's arrogance and pseudo-power crosses all the limits of cruelty and atrocity. After satisfying his wounded ego, he now bothers about the marriage of his daughter- Lalita Gauri. Meanwhile, Nana is getting married for the seventh time to 'a just-this-year ripened bride' whom he has bought for three hundred gold coins and a great gift of land. When the wedding is taking place Ghashiram reaches there and inquires about Lalita Gauri saying that no one has seen her for ten days. Nana informs him that she has been sent to Chandra the midwife in Kasba Peth. When Ghashiram inquires Chandra about Gauri, she reveals that Gauri is dead and shows the spot where she has been buried. Ghashiram starts digging the soil like an animal, sees Gauri's corpse and covers his face. Enraged Ghashiram chokes Chandra to death and rushes to Nana who tries to convince him in a philosophical manner.

After Ghashiram has left, Nana orders to remove Gauri's corpse and throw in the river. Sutradhar comments that Ghashiram Kotwal is not to be pitied because his unmarried daughter died when she was pregnant. The turn of events transforms Ghashiram into fiend who plunges headlong into bloodshed. Some Brahmans from South India arrive at Poona considering it to be the city of luck. The Sutradhar warns them to stay away from the Kotwal's garden but the Brahmans being hungry pluck some fruits from the garden. Ghashiram charges them of theft and orders to lock them in the empty cell for the night. The audience is informed that the Brahmans are packed in the cell as there is not sufficient space in it consequently some of the Brahmans die of suffocation during the night. Sardar Phakade, a Maratha landowner and Ghashiram's enemy grabs the situation as a golden chance against
him. He complains the Peshwa saying, "Sir, give justice. Ghashiram suffocated these men" (411). The Peshwa immediately calls Nana to his palace but Nana sends the message that he is busy in his morning prayers.

The infuriated Poona Brahmans come to Nana's mansion. The Sutradhar informs Nana about the situation saying that the angry Brahmans want "an order to behead Ghashiram Kotwal." Nana, to pacify the mob, immediately issues the order for Ghashiram's death. Ghashiram, unaware of the events that have taken place, orders the soldier to bring the fruit stealer Brahmans before him. Suddenly he listens the aggressive mob approaching and asks them to stop. The mob is stunned for a moment but after that begins to surround him. Ghashiram cannot be seen. The Sutradhar describes the situation:

They beat him.
They shaved his head.
They *sindur*-daubed his head.
They rode him around on a camel.
They tied him to the leg of an elephant.
The city of Poona watched it all. (414)

And, to quote him further "And in the end came The End" (414). One hand tied behind his back, beaten, disfigured and bloodied Ghashiram faces the irate mob. He exploited the resources of power, faced the cruel game of politics but accepts the end as a punishment of his misdoings towards his daughter. He has understood the futility of the power game. The mob attacks him and finally he lies motionless. Nana arrives at the scene and calms the crowd announcing: "A disease has been controlled . . . Let the corpse of sinful Ghashya rot. Let the wolves and dogs have it. Let the worms have it . . . We have commanded that there be festivities for three days to mark this happy occasion" (416). The crowd cheers. Gulabi,
Nana's wives, Nana, the crowd- all dance.

N.S Dharan in his article "Ghashiram Kotwal: Tendulkar's Thesis on Power Politics" comments: "Ghashiram, like Silence!, is a powerful dramatic statement of the violence that humans are capable of when actuated by envy, lust, revenge and craze for power. It is a totally theatrical play set in an environment of intrigue, hypocrisy, greed and brutality-features inherent in today's power politics." (99)

Realism: Vijay Tendulkar's Ghashiram Kotwal depicts a very realistic picture of the political and moral decadence and the powerful role that sex plays in it. Though set in a historical background, the play has a contemporary and universal appeal. This is further emphasized when the following statement by the playwright in the interview to Gauri Ramnarayan, regarding the genesis of the play, is gone through:

The inspiration for the play was a topical situation. I was working for Loksatta when the first major riots were launched in Bombay by the Shiv Sena. Bal Thackeray seemed an ordinary man, not at all the sort of person who would indulge in daredevilry. The middle-class boys who followed him were not demons. In that particular situation they acquired power, abused it and spread terror. I sensed that terror in my newspaper office. We were not free to write anything about the Shiv Sena. If the title" Senapati" was not prefixed to Thackeray's name in a report, a morcha would be taken out with burning and looting.

Actually, the Shiv Sena was deliberately fuelled by the ruling party to establish a force against the masses. Then came Krishna Menon and his election campaign when the Shiv Sena was pitted against the communists. You can see the similarity between the Ghashiram incident and this event to
Socio - Individual Tensions: The play is not so much about the historical personages of Ghashiram or Nana but about the way in which social institutions like caste and religion exhibits power to create and destroy people like Ghashiram. The structure of the play seeks the conversion of Ghashiram from a humble Brahman to a cruel ruler and from a cruel ruler to a desperate victim of despotic power. In this process the mechanization of power has been used by the playwright as an instrument of oppression and exploitation in society. V.B Deshpande observes that: "It is possible to look at the play as an allegory of the struggle between the individual and the society, between power and exploitation" (25).

Ghashiram, a simple Brahmin from Kanauj, humiliated by society in various ways gets transformed into Ghashiram, the despot. Consequently, he develops a strong urge to attain unlimited power at any cost and again, his this ambition is exploited by a political power- the power of Nana Phadnavis which brings his inevitable end. It is satire on the contemporary social situation which shields the powerful and punishes the helpless. Samik Bandopadhyay, in a Note on Ghashiram Kotwal observes:

Tendulkar, in his social criticism, is more concerned with the mechanism of power operating within society than with the economic and political implications and sources of that power, on the lines of Focault who said:' One of the first things that has to be understood is that power isn't localized in the State apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed'. (588)

Gender: In the play, Ghashiram domineers the people of Poona through the power which he gets by offering his innocent daughter to 'the old overripe bastard'- Nana. Thus, the theme of
sex forms an inseparable part of the content of the play. Ghashiram barters his daughter for power. So he asks Nana to raise him to the position of the Kotwal. In a patriarchal set up, he is authorized to barter his daughter for power. The other instance of patriarchy is Nana getting married for the seventh time after the death of Gauri. The women in Ghashiram Kotwal have no voice and merely exist as sex symbols. Gauri has few lines in the play but certainly none that hint at her own perception of her experience. The other female character, Chandra appears only once on stage, that too, for performing a particular function.

Ghashiram Kotwal has a historical set up and it is the male who dominates the power politics in such plays. The female has a very limited role to play and are supposed to suffer meekly. Sexuality has a clear link with the strategies of power, and it is this link that Ghashiram Kotwal too probes in its story of the rise and fall of Ghashiram.

**Power and Violence:** According to Girish Karnad, in Ghashiram Kotwal Tendulkar deals with the theme of "emergence of demons in public," created by political leaders for the fulfillment of their aims. Tendulkar had himself talked about a group of young boys, who have created quite a furor and called themselves the Shiv Sena. The members of this Sena were very ordinary, average youths yet they were able to create an atmosphere of fear. Tendulkar, who wondered at the psychology that transformed ordinary young men into a raging and destructive mob, realized that the Sena had been created by the ruling party to counter the communists in Maharashtra. As Neela Bhalla translates in her article "Ghashiram Kotwal: Text and Sub- Text,"

The hunting dogs got transformed into ferocious tigers and the Government began to fear them. When I saw this, I felt the urge to use this theme in a play and as I traversed backwards in history, I noticed that this was a repetitive pattern - such individuals and parties had been created through history. Hitler was one such example. I felt that using a contemporary personality, party or
setting would limit my scope. When I was exploring further and further into
the past, the idea of Ghashiram and folk theatre came to my mind.(141)

The play is a discourse of power- the power of Nana which makes Ghashiram the
Kotwal of Poona, the power of Ghashiram which terrorizes the people of Poona and the
power of Lalita Gauri which captivates Nana for some time. Samik Bandopadhyay, in Note
on Ghashiram Kotwal, observes that:

In Ghashiram, power is defined' horizontally' (in the sense in which Maurice
Durveger uses it in The Idea of Politics, London, 1966), in terms of
individuals against individuals; from humiliation, to revenge in assertion, to
eventual victimization; played out against a background of political and moral
decadence and degeneracy, with sexuality impinging on strategies of power. A
whole aura of hymns and religious ceremonial provide the ironic screen that is
pierced through and through by the crudest exercises of power. (587)

Religion manifest in caste dominance and ceremony is a device of power in
Ghashiram. The material force is provided by the agents who construct and operate
hierarchies that they can topple or reshuffle at will. Nana needs Ghashiram and Ghashiram
needs Nana. This is a temporary arrangement in the shifting game of power that Nana
exploits as long as necessary and can drop the moment it has served its purpose. "The
deception of deputation constitute yet another device of power. The real power uses the
masks of deputation to mediate the exercise of power, to hide from the victims the real face
of power, so that all resistance is effectively deflected" (web. shodhganga). Tendulkar, in
Ghashiram, observes the operations of religiosiy, sexuality and deputationist politics as
devices of power.

In the execution of power many instances of violence take place in the play. Since
Ghashiram derives sadistic pleasure from inflicting inhuman torture on others, Tendulkar adopts various means to present the scenes of violence like-a red hot steel ball placed on an innocent Brahman's hand, twenty two Brahmans suffocated to death, choking Chandra the midwife to death to manifest the execution of power. In history also, Ghashiram's time was the time of terror. It was the time of Ghashiram's cruel dictatorship. Even today the pictures of Ghashiram's cruelty can be found in 'Peshwa-Sangralaya, Parvati, Poona.'

**Conflicts in the Play:** The ever-increasing appetite for power is the fatal flaw in Ghashiram's character. His over ambition of becoming powerful brings rich dividends to Nana. It gives Nana an opportunity to satisfy his physical lust and to establish a reign of terror. Ghashiram is a fool to think that being a Kotwal means absolute power in his hands but forgets that the borrowed power has very little existence in the world of power politics. The inevitable end of Ghashiram asserts the transient nature and the futility of the game of power. The victim-victimizer relationship in the play gives rise to conflicts at various levels, with the clash between Nana and Ghashiram being at the top. Nana Phadnavis and Ghashiram both are corrupt in one way or the other. To quote Tendulkar himself: "Both are Brahmins, but the only difference is of power. One is availing the power and the other is struggling for power. One is on the screen, the other is behind the screen. One is outwardly fatal for the society, the other is inwardly fatal for the society; one is ambitious, the other is over ambitious" (qut. in Siddiqui 78).

The play is a classic as it dissolves the boundaries between historicity and eternity. The issues raised in the play belong to all times and climes in a sense that the characters of Nana, Ghashiram and Gauri, the ancestors of power politics that the world had created, will always continue to be created as pawns in the game of power. The play has a relevance to the contemporary scenario which makes its appeal not topical but universal. In Note on *Ghashiram Kotwal* by Samik Bandopadhyay, Tendulkar said:
This is not a historical play. It is a story, in prose, verse, music and dance set in a historical era. Ghashirams are creations of socio-political forces which know no barriers of time and place. Although based on a historical legend, I have no intention of commentary on the morals, or lack of them, of the Peshwa, Nana Phadnavis or Ghashiram. The moral of this story, if there is any, may be looked for elsewhere.(586)

*Ghashiram Kotwal* is a thought provoking play and has relevance to all societies and all ages. In a sense, it is universal. The struggle for power is an ongoing process at regional, national and international levels. As far as involvement of sex in politics is considered the daily newspapers are flooded with politicians involvement in sex scandals. Characters like 'Ghashiram' and 'Nana are also beyond space and time.

### 3.6. *Kamala*

*Kamala* (1981), another play written in the naturalistic mode, is inspired by a real life incident-an expose by a newspaper journalist. Ashwin Sarin, an *Indian Express* reporter, bought a girl from a rural flesh market and presented her at a press conference to prove that women are still being bought and sold. Tendulkar has used this incident as a launching pad and has raised certain cardinal questions regarding the value system of the modern generation which is highly ambitious, success oriented and is ready to sacrifice human values in the name of humanity itself.

*Kamala* is one of the most popular plays written by Vijay Tendulkar. It has not only been successively performed on stage but also adapted for the silver screen. The playwright deserves a special applause for realistically handling the gender politics and for skillfully
portraying the latent relationship of such politics with the larger social politics outside 'family' across gender divide. The complex politics of gender, one of the favorite themes of Tendulkar, has been effectively dealt with in most of his plays but *Kamala* offers a more nuanced exposition of the issue than other plays. The playwright draws skillfully, a parallel between Kamala, the rural, uneducated victim of human trafficking and Sarita, the urban, educated and intelligent wife of Jaisingh.

At the centre of the play is a self-seeking journalist, Jaisingh Jadhav who purchases Kamala, an Adivasi woman, from a flesh market at Luhardaga (Ranchi) Bihar, for two hundred and fifty rupees to prove that such auctions still take place in the latter half of the twentieth century. The play opens in the drawing room of Jaisingh's Bungalow at Neeti Bagh, New Delhi. Sarita is Jaisingh's ideal and devoted wife. Kakasaheb is Sarita's uncle who runs a newspaper and has come to Delhi for his newspaper quota. Jaisingh has gone out of Delhi and is expected to be back any moment. Sarita asks her maid Kamala Bai to make all the necessary arrangements for Jaisingh.

Meanwhile, Kakasaheb comments on investigative journalism of the present day. After sometime Jaisingh arrives with a village woman, Kamala, draped in a dirty *saree*. When Kakasaheb enquires about Kamala he simply answers that she is to be escorted to a certain place. Later when Sarita asks him about Kamala, he answers that he has bought her to prove that such auctions still take place. He tells Sarita that he is going to present Kamala in a press conference scheduled to take place that very evening. The police, the whole system, everyone knows that these auctions exist but they do not dare to admit it. In this press conference, where Kamala being presented as an evidence, he would become the first journalist to explore such case. He has turned the world upside down to find such a bazaar and is the first journalist to reach there. He asks Sarita not to discuss these details with anybody till the press conference is over. When his friend Jain comes to meet him he does not
At the scheduled time, when Kamala has to be taken for the press conference, Sarita asks Jaisingh whether she should give one of her sarees to Kamala as her saree is torn. To this he replies, "I want her to look just as she is at the Press Conference. It's very important"

Kakasaheb and Jaisingh discuss present day journalism. When the maid Kamala Bai feels insecure regarding her own position in the house due to Kamala's presence, Jaisingh asks Sarita to convey to her that Kamala is not going to stay there as she would be send to a women's home after the Press Conference. He can be tried and sentenced for buying her under the Indian Penal Code. Sarita is worried about Jaisingh getting arrested, but he consoles her saying that if anything happens, his editor is going to fight his case up to the Supreme court.

Act II opens in the drawing room. Jaisingh, Kamala and Jain arrive after the Press Conference is over. Jaisingh and Jain, in a good mood, discuss the Press Conference and the questions asked by other journalist at the Conference. Through their discussion, it is revealed that all sort of humiliating, vulgar and irrelevant questions were asked to her. Kakasaheb, on hearing all this sarcastically comments that Jaisingh has sold the woman he has purchased to other journalists to ask such offending questions. Jaisingh reacts angrily and the atmosphere gets heated up. Later, when Sarita is sitting alone Kamala comes into the room and sits on the ground near her. She asks Sarita for how much she has been bought. To this Sarita replies 'for seven hundred'. Kamala thinks this to be an 'expensive bargain' as Sarita has not been able to deliver a child for her master. Confused, she places forth an offer:

So, memsahib, both of us must stay here together like sisters. We'll keep the master happy. We'll make him prosperous. The master will have children. I'll do the hard work, and I'll bring forth the children, I'll bring them up. You are
an educated woman. You keep the accounts and run the house. Put on lovely clothes and make merry with the master. Go out with him on holidays and feast days. Like today. I can't manage all that. And we must have land of our own. Don't worry about it, that's my responsibility. Fifteen days of the month, you sleep with the master; the other fifteen, I'll sleep with him. Agreed? (35)

This episode is of great dramatic significance as it makes Sarita feel that her situation in the house is not different from Kamala. She identifies herself with Kamala. Her marriage with Jaisingh has made her a slave and Jaisingh; the master of the slave. She shares what she has realized with Kakasaheb later in the play. Meanwhile, Kakasaheb receives a phone call asking for Jaisingh Jadhav from Neeti Bagh Police Station as a consequence of the previous day's Press Conference. Despite Sarita's opposition, Kamala has been sent to an orphanage. Sarita is quite upset by this and when Jaisingh asks her to get ready for a party she denies going there. Sarita, enlightened by Kamala's proposal, shares her agony with Kakasaheb. She says that she also wants to arrange a Press Conference and make others, "listen to the story of how he bought the slave Kamala and made use of her. The other slave he got free - not just free - the slave's father shelled out the money - a big sum. Ask him what he did with it" (46).

She realizes that the institution of marriage is only meant for the subjugation of females and endows power only to man. She expresses her anguish in the following words: "I was asleep. I was unconscious even when I was awake. Kamala woke me up. With a shock. Kamala showed me everything. Because of her, I suddenly saw things clearly. I saw that the man I thought my partner was the master of a slave. . . . (46).

Meanwhile Jain informs that Jaisingh has been sacked and the proprietor of the newspaper has done this under the pressure of some very big people who are involved in the flesh racket. When Kakasaheb calls this unfair, Jain says, "a big paper doesn't recognize
respect and all that, Kakasaheb - it only knows about circulation and advertisements. And profit and loss" (48). On realizing that he has lost his job, Jaisingh, in wild anger, abuses Sheth Singania, the owner of the paper. Jaisingh has drunk heavily and collapses on the sofa. Sarita says that he is going through a bad phase of his life and needs her support but this does not mean that she would forget what she has realized about her position in the house. She is firm on the decision that one day she will stop being a slave. She asserts: "I'll no longer be an object to be used and thrown away. I'll do what I wish, and no one will rule over me. The day has to come. And I'll pay whatever price I have to pay for it" (52). The play ends here.

**Socio - Individual Tensions:** As stated earlier, inspired by a real life incident, *Kamala* compels us to question the specifics of our family formation. The play raises several unresolved familial and social questions which draw attention towards the discourses of power latent in the very structure of our family and society. As Arundhati Banerjee observes: "Like Kamala, Sarita is also an object in Jadhav's life, and object that provides physical enjoyment, social companionship and domestic comfort" (581-582)

**A Gyno-centric Play:** The play is completely a narration of the sufferings of Kamala and anguish of Sarita. Without the presence of these two women the play would not have been so influential. They are the pair of women Tendulkar is accustomed to present, who superficially have contrasting traits but share the same fate.

**The Power Systems Operating: Social, Patriarchal and Gender -Divide:** The plot of the play is constituted by several overlapping orbits of power, existing and functioning simultaneously. The play uncovers the strategies by which the Power system conditions its prey. Sarita is shown as a devoted wife whose existence is circumscribed by the interest to serve her husband. She willingly accepts her role as a doting wife who is seen as keeping an
alert note of the phone calls for her husband, arranging things before the master makes his entry into the house after his professional ordeal. She brushes aside Kakasaheb's queries about her discomfiture very casually. She even defends her husband against Kakasaheb's outbursts on sensational modern day journalism of which her husband is a part.

She believes that a wife should serve her husband without any fuss, just out of her sense of love and duty. She seems happily given to the family system without any idea of the fact that the institution she is readily subscribing to is positioning her in a way she willingly cooperates in her own subordination. She has no problem in being kept outside the periphery of her husband's work place. Her attitude reminds of "He for God only and she for God in him,"-an almost universally held assumption that man's purpose in life is to serve God, the state, society while woman's purpose is to serve man.

This familial and social opportunism uncovers the circulation of power through the authoritarian family structure subjugating the identity of women and making her a slave. According to Ratul Nandi: "The text of Kamala manifestly demonstrates the force embedded in the binaries of master slave and victor victim. The paradigmatic opposition in such binaries is played out against changing contexts of family and society. In the immediate context of family, such opposition assumes gender politics" (124).

This is further reinforced by the entry of Kamala, who has been purchased by Jaisingh for 'two hundred and fifty rupees' and stands into a master slave or victor victim relationship with him. Kamala symbolizes how women internalize the principles of Patriarchy. Feminity is servility for Kamala. She believes that all women are meant to be sold and bought and even Sarita is no exception to it. She is shocked when she comes to know that Sarita has no children as she is unable to accept the fact that a woman bought at an expensive price cannot even deliver a child for the master.
The episode between Kamala and Sarita is a crucial moment which brings Sarita out of her illusionary existence and compels her to reconsider her own standing in the family matrix. The point of Sarita's identification with Kamala is the decisive moment, as for the first time she views herself from an angle other than what she had been asked to look at. She perceives that she is only playing the 'role' formerly provisioned for her. She feels herself as enslaved and used by Jaisingh as Kamala is. She realizes that the relationship in which she is tied up is also one of master - slave or victor- victim. All of a sudden, she is faced with the revelation that she is a mere slave to Jaisingh, a slave who must carry out every order given by the master. She is constantly forced to be at the giving end and symbolizes slavery.

The third woman in the play, the maid servant Kamala Bai, is also ensnared in power game. Tendulkar has quite skillfully and deliberately named the maid after victimized Kamala. Though she could never see herself being complicit in the dynamics of Power politics, in her total disregard for Kamala, a defense mechanism which prevents her from thinking above her station can be easily discerned. Sensitivity to a fellow sufferer is not her prerogative. She is only concerned with keeping her place as servant undamaged. The working of power and its consolidation gets clearer as one finds the structure of family perpetually advantageous to men. All the three women characters are tyrannized by Jaisingh at different levels.

This working of Power and its consolidation is taken beyond the familial context, to a more pronounced context of society, by the subject of social opportunism. To uncover this social opportunism and to expose the insensitive, utilitarian fabric of the social world, Tendulkar has targeted the sensationalism of modern day journalism and its callous ideology which, virtually is dedicated to social welfare but in reality draws sustenance from the decree of with the 'sensationalism'. The message implied is that the modern day sensational journalism is enmeshed political systems and both of them subsist on the various forms of
social injustice. This also reveals the hegemonic construction of the society in which exists hierarchy of power. Jaisingh, the renowned journalist, who wields absolute power in the family, appears to be at the mercy of forces above him. There is no denying the fact that this mission has definitely exposed the covert nexus between the police and the politicians. On the other hand, Jaisingh is ready to endanger his life only if the case promises recognition to him. To quote Ratul Nandi: "The lofty cause of exposing the grubby social practice shouldered by Jaisingh ultimately turns out to be no more than an instrument of his own self-aggrandizement as a journalist, designed to promote the circulation of the daily"(126).

His pseudo-socialist concern for Kamala fades away as soon as the Press Conference is over. He has nothing to do with the plight of this poor Adivasi woman and sends her to a nari ashram. He is concerned only in exposing the 'bad trends' in society but has no solution to offer. Tendulkar has successfully used Kakasaheb's voice for critiquing the modern day journalism. Kakasaheb's incisive observation and his verbal assaults are constantly contested and resisted by Jaisingh but his point of view is vindicated by his final dismissal from the job. Kakasaheb is completely shocked when Jaisingh is sacked from the office of the newspaper for which he had worked so hard. The familial area is dominated by Jaisingh but his domain is crushed in the social arena. There his role shifts from a master to a slave and victim and he is persecuted by his persecutors. He becomes aware of his own position in the hierarchy of power. The familial, social and political mazes inside which one is imprisoned, makes one both, submit to power and at times get empowered.

The power situations modeled in the play remain beyond the control of the characters who appear to be powerful. Hence Jaisingh is an authority in himself but is empowered by the discourses through power streams forward. The women characters reveal the power arrangements in the family. Jaisingh too, in his way fits into the game of power intrinsic to social organism. Thus the play emerge as a probing account of lived reality which relates the
politics of family to the bigger politics of social establishment. After the play ends, the audience is left to experience the dictatorial sway of power which overlaps the margins of family and society, private and public, women and men.

**Conflicts:** The conflict in the play does not arise due to any external factor but exists because of the circumstances in which they are placed. The dilemma of Sarita is whether to assert her individuality or to surrender before the social conditioning. Jaisingh, who considers himself a powerful person, ends in being disillusioned by his own powerlessness and losing his job. Kamala is a victim of human trafficking. P. Pramila Devi in her article "Vijay Tendulkar's Kamala: The Theatre of Cruelty" observes:

Kamala is a symbol of slavery. Sarita is a symbol of sophisticated slavery.
Kamalabai is a slave to her master and mistress. Jaisingh himself is a slave to his employer. So none is free from the cruelty of their oppressors in society.
Jaisingh, the Persecutor, persecutes his victims-Kamala, Sarita and Kamalabai. His role shifts to that of a victim and he is persecuted by his proprietor, the persecutor . . .So man is either a slave to others or an oppressors of others in this world. He is either submissive or aggressive. Struggle for power, supersession and submission, has been a continuous process in primitive man's life and still it continues to flourish in the life of a civilized man.(118)

The skill of the playwright lies not only in making Sarita indentify with Kamala, but in driving home to its readers the critical understanding that how women, no matter urban or rural, are constantly being consumed through exploitation and pushed to the fringe of their endurance in a typically patriarchal set-up. At the same time, it illustrates that the identification with Kamala is not a prerogative afforded only to woman; even the men can identify themselves easily with Kamala.
Ghashiram Kotwal

Silence! The Court is in Session
3.7. **Kanyadaan**

*Kanyadaan*, the play that has fetched Tendulkar, one of India's highest literary honours the Saraswati Samman, is one of the controversial plays of the playwright. The play, inspired by a real life incident, is Tendulkar's comment on Indian society. It is particularly a study of the psychological gap that exists between the upper caste and lower caste people of Indian society. The play raises certain thought provoking social and moral questions which are not easy to answer. As Joydeep Bhattacharyya in his article "Vijay Tendulkar's *Kanyadaan*: Negotiating Social 'Truth(s)" observes: "Tendulkar, in *Kanyadaan*, has used domestic theatre of conjugality to probe into the ideologies which relate to the public world of the social and political. This method sets the two worlds, the private and the public, on a line of correspondence with each other that systematically results into a negotiation of gender and caste" (83).

A two-act five-scene play, *Kanyadaan* is written- with only seven characters. The course of action, centering on the Brahmin Devlalikar family and its Dalit son-in-law Arun Athavale, provides a simultaneous interrogation of the age-old victimization of women perpetrated through the mechanism of patriarchy and the manifold politics of caste which is also a contributing factor to the sustenance of an oppressive structure of society. The story mainly revolves around- Nath Devlalikar, the Brahmin, a lifelong socialist and a senior member of the state's Legislative assembly; his daughter Jyoti; and the son-in-law Arun, a Dalit who is an aspiring writer. Seva, Nath's wife, is a women's rights activist. The family is urbane, intellectual and sophisticated. The couple is shown as having an extremely busy schedule due to their multifarious association with the public sphere. They hardly get time to spare with Jyoti and Jaiprakash, their children. Despite of this shortage of time they are quite
responsible, loving and caring parents. Their daughter, Jyoti takes an appointment from her parents and tells them that she has decided to get married.

Her father congratulates her without asking anything about the boy but her mother is shocked at this unexpected 'decision' of hers. When Seva enquires about the boy and his family background, Jyoti tells them that the name of the boy is Arun Athavale and he is a Dalit. His parents, with their six children live in the village. His elder brother does nothing so Arun has to support the family financially. She has been knowing him for two months. When Seva asks her, what is so special in Arun? She replies that he writes poems and he is writing his autobiography. She tells that she has read some parts of the autobiography and after reading it she has felt that she could do anything to make him happy.

Seva believes that Jyoti is acting in haste and two months is a very short period to have a complete and clear understanding of the man. She is contradicted by Nath, who is very excited to know that his daughter is willing to marry a dalit. He discards her worries as 'nonsense'. Jyoti's brother, Jaiprakash says that Jyoti does not has any strong emotions for Arun. Seva is worried at her attitude towards marriage. She tries to make her understand that marriage is a lifelong relationship and there has to be some kind of stability and some compatibility in lifestyles, but Nath does not agree with Seva's idea.

Seva gets irritated by the arguments that Nath gives in favor of Arun. He is in such a hurry to fix Jyoti's wedding that he does not want to consider the pros and cons of the marriage. Seva thinks practically and tries to convince Jyoti in every possible way that she should give a second thought to her decision. Seva knows that Jyoti has been brought up in a culture which is very different from that of Arun. She is aware of the fact that it would be very difficult for her to adjust in a completely different scenario and after marriage, there is no stepping back for a woman. Seva advises Jyoti to reconsider her decision but she,
supported by her father, has already made her mind and does not want escape from her commitment.

In Scene II of Act I, Jyoti brings Arun home so that he can be introduced to her parents. Arun becomes uncomfortable at Jyoti's house saying, "These large buildings are just like crocodiles and sharks, whenever they want, they can gulp you down." He says that he "can't fit into her unwrinkled Tinopal world" (512, 513). The huge cultural difference that exists between them is quite evident when he says,

Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my father's hut? Without vomiting? Tell me, Jyoti, can you shit everyday in our slum's village toilet like my mother? Can you beg, quaking at every door, for a little grass for our buffaloes? Come on, tell me! . . . And you thought of marrying me. Our life is not the Socialists' service camp. It is hell, and I mean hell. A hell named life. (514)

He further expresses his contempt for the high society people. He has a streak of violence latent in his psyche. To quote his words: "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).

When Seva asks Arun how he will run his household without a stable career, he replies that he would be brewing illicit liquor. Seva is shocked at this. Nath enters, greets Arun warmly appreciating his creativity. He is very happy to meet Arun and expresses his feelings saying, "today I have broken the caste barrier in the real sense. My home has become Indian in the real sense of the term. I am happy today, very happy" (519).

After Arun has left, Seva and Jayaprakash tell Nath about the rude behavior of Arun
but Nath is not ready to understand the situation. Seva is not ready to accept Arun as Jyoti's husband. Nath is quite optimistic about this marriage and believes that the position of the dalits can be improved by accepting them. Seva is not ready to use her daughter's life for an experiment. Jayaprakash is also not in favor of this marriage. Realizing the gravity of the matter, Nath asks Jyoti to give an objective assessment of Arun. She says that she has made a commitment and cannot step back now. She is aware of Arun's complex personality but does not want to run away from her commitment. Seva directly asks her to change her decision and break the commitment but Nath stands by Jyoti's side and encourages her saying, "if Jyoti breaks her word, if she wriggles out of her responsibilities, it would be a kind of treachery. It would amount to running away from the challenge. As a father I would feel ashamed if my daughter were to run away" (527). Nath, being an idealist, believes that he can reform the society and uproot casteism if his daughter marries to a dalit.

Act II, scene I, opens after few months of Jyoti's marriage. Arun and Jyoti do not have any definite arrangements of accommodation. Arun stays with different friends each day and Jyoti lives with her parents. Jyoti informs her parents that she has left Arun as he beats and tortures her daily. On hearing this Nath becomes restless and says, "Seva, let not this wonderful experiment fail! This dream which is struggling to turn real, let it not crumble into dust before our eyes! We will have to do something. We must save this marriage. Not necessarily for our Jyoti's sake . . . This is not just a question of our daughter's life, Seva, this has . . . a far wider significance . . . this experiment is a very precious experiment" (537).

Arun comes there and when Seva questions him, he accepts barbarism as his traditional way of life. He does not want to change. Jyoti decides to go back with Arun and is encouraged by her father. Act II, scene II opens with Nath reading Arun's autobiography, praising and appreciating it in heavy words. At the same moment Seva informs that Jyoti has been hospitalized as Arun has beaten and kicked his pregnant wife causing an internal injury
in her stomach. Nath is surprised and shocked to know that this barbaric person has written such a beautiful autobiography. Seva replies, "he 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. It appears that this is the monumental mission he has set out to fulfill" (544).

Seva calls Arun a shameless parasite who wants to live on her daughter's blood. She tells Nath that Arun constantly taunts her about her caste and about her parents, heaping foul abuse on them for being highborn. To analyze the situation, Jayaprakash gives example of Middle East the Israeli forces and the Palestinian guerilla's inhuman deeds and says, "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 fact that Jayaprakash wants to assert is that Arun belongs to the Dalit community which has been a victim of untouchability, poverty, violence and ill treatment from the high class. Now he is returning all those miseries to Jyoti. He says," 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 "(547). Nath does not agree with him. Arun comes to meet Nath as he wants him to preside over the discussion of his autobiography. When Nath denies doing so, Arun blackmails him saying that," you got your daughter married to a dalit" (552).

Nath is very disturbed by Arun's behavior and says that he would prefer to die than to deliver the speech. Seva convinces him that his refusal will make Arun find new ways to torment Jyoti. She says that the only option left to him is to preside over the function and praise the book. When Nath returns from the discussion he confesses that he has given a
hollow and hypocritical speech and has expressed his views exactly opposite to what he really feels for Arun. He realizes that it was he who always encouraged Jyoti to adopt a revolutionary method. Seva consoles him saying that it was Jyoti's decision to marry Arun. He is disillusioned and accepts his ideological defeat, "If she has committed any crime it is this: she took her father's words for gospel truth. She adopted her father's values. She was guided by her father's humanism and liberalism. Jayaprakash, do me a favour. Reject your father. Learn to see through his naivety and idiocy. Don't ever rely on his wisdom. If you do, you too will ruin yourself" (558).

Jyoti, after sensing the hollowness and hypocrisy in his speech, wants to know the reason behind his deceitful speech. She realizes that he has done so only for her sake. Nath answers that he did it for his family. Jyoti says that she does not belong to his family now she belongs to a dalit family and asks Nath to admit that he hates Arun. To this Nath replies that he does not hate Arun, he dislikes his tendencies. Jyoti reacts saying, "Putting man's beastliness to sleep, and awakening the godhead within is an absurd notion. You made me waste twenty years of my life before I could discover this" (563).

She asserts that bestiality is something which cannot be separated from Arun. Whenever she tried to do so she failed. Arun is both the beast, and the lover. Both are bound together, one within the other, they are one. It is impossible to separate one from the other and she has no other choice but to accept him. Nath says that if she wants to leave Arun, he will support her. She replies that it was he who has taught them that it is cowardly to bow down to circumstances. She blames Nath saying that he has taught them the impractical ways of life. Phrases like 'I march with utter faith in the goal'; 'Cowards stay ashore, every wave opens a path for me.', when used by Nath in his speeches never fail to get audience cheering but in reality they have numbed the entire consciousness of his children. She says,
We cannot run away. To save one's self by running away may be the smart thing to do, and other people may get away with this kind of cleverness, but even if running away was the general rule of conduct, we shall continue to recite 'March on, Oh soldier!' and continue to lose our lives as guinea pigs in the experiment, and you, Bhai . . . you will go on safely rousing the god sleeping in man.(565)

Nath is in pain. Jyoti continues,"I was deeply offended by your hypocrisy. I thought: why did this man have to inject and drug us every day with truth and goodness? And if can get away from it at will, what right had he to close all our options? . . . Someone said these people kidnap little children, break their limbs and make them cripples. Bhai, forgive me for my words, but you have made us . . . " (566). Nath is stunned and Jyoti moves towards the door. Nath asks her in a pathetic tone if she will come again. Jyoti, with certitude says that she won't come again and orders that none of them should come to her house. She leaves her father's world saying, "I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar now, I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I don't say harijan. I despise the term. I am an untouchable, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don't touch me. Fly from my shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values" (566).Jyoti goes away. Drained of life, Nath looks in the direction of Jyoti's exists. The play ends here.

Shilpi Rishi Srivastava in her article "Kanyadaan: The Admission of Defeat and Intellectual Confusion" states: "The tense, gripping play, charged with an undercurrent of violence uncertainties and anger, concerns itself with questions that are crucial to all societies grappling with change and social barriers" (103).

Vijay Tendulkar was awarded the Saraswati Samman for this play. In Note on Kanyadaan, Appendix IV in Collected Plays in Translation to Kanyadaan, he called the play,
"not the story of a victory; it is the admission of defeat and intellectual confusion. It gives expression to a deep-rooted malaise and its pains." In his speech he said that, "You are honouring me with the Saraswati Samman today for a play for which I once had a slipper hurled at me. Perhaps it is the fate of the play to have earned both this honour and that insult. As its creator, I respect both verdicts (598).

**Realism**: Tendulkar asserts that: "All my creative writing begins, not from an idea but from an experience, mine or somebody else's which then becomes mine. It was such an experience, another's to begin with, that provided the starting point for *Kanyadaan* (qut. in Gokhale 50).

*Kanyadaan* has been labeled as an anti-dalit play by critics. Tendulkar was accused of presenting the Dalit in a negative way. As accepted by Tendulkar, the depiction of the dalit poet character, Arun Athavale, is too close to an actual person about whom he had heard earlier. The Dalit community frowned at the play as Arun was seen as Tendulkar's idea of Dalit's in general. The play incited the anti-dalit feelings. In this regard, Tendulkar's statement is worth quoting here that:

> I have drawn my personal experience to write about a problem that belongs to my world. It so happens that a Dalit youth has unavoidably entered this problem. I believe there can be, I'm sure there is, another side to the theme I have dealt with. But it would not be right if I borrowed this familiar yet unknown world and wrote about it. I do not think I have fully understood the Dalits. (qut. in Gokhale 50)

**The basic social unit-Family** :-

Joydeep Bhattacharya observes: "Kanyadaan's importance as a 'social problem play' is unlimited for its successful handling of the delicate issues of caste and gender on the micro
level of personal relations in family."(94)

*Kanyadaan* is one of those plays of Tendulkar which have located family and gender relations in the larger contexts of the caste conflict in Indian society. This is also a play which represents women as passive carriers of familial ideologies without any political will for change. Nath, the successful progressive social reformer, believes in transforming the society. Being an idealist, he dreams of a casteless society and feels that the marriage between a high caste girl and a dalit boy is a step in the direction of bringing this radical change. He puts the entire onus of bringing out the hidden goodness and talent in dalit men, who have suffered humiliation for generations at the hands of the high caste, on the girls like Jyoti. For him the inter caste marriage is the solution for this and once it has taken place it has to be kept intact at any cost.

Jyoti is the product of her father's ideologies. She is groomed by Nath's idealism that man's expressions might be polluted but this can never corrupt the goodness of his soul. When she decides to marry Arun, she seems to be guided by this humanist principle which conceptualizes a false notion of the identity of a man with a different socio-cultural background. Her total conviction in her father's philosophy makes her confident in her decision. Arun's shared memory provides him with the knowledge of collective humiliation of his caste down the centuries. He belongs to scavengers who reside in stinking, overcrowded shelters, eat stale food and are accustomed to the co-existing sights of wife-beating and love-making. This background of his is in stunning contrast to that of Jyoti. He seems to visualize in Jyoti, the racial oppressors of his family, the concomitant force for his age-old humiliation.

Jyoti, for her father, is like a guinea-pig for his 'wonderful experiment'. For Arun, she becomes an instrument to seek the atonement of the sins the upper caste had committed. She
suffers both as a daughter and a wife and becomes a site, a battle ground on which the clash between her father's idealism and Arun's retaliation takes place.

**Caste and Culture:**

Joydeep Bhattacharya states:

*Kanyadaan* exerts its utmost significance through the ingenuity of its engagement with the issue of caste. It seems to portray an amalgam of opposing perspectives as regards this relevant socio-political issue whose origin dates back to antiquity. The approach of the progressive upper-caste to the caste system, specially to the bottom line of the so-called untouchables, and its welfare enterprise of emancipation of the downtrodden receives a critical address in equal with the reaction of the traditional oppressed which also undergoes a scrutiny. (85)

This theme seems to be more relevant in the present social and political culture of the country rapidly being decided on the line of caste and religion. The play suggests that caste discrimination generates the feeling of helplessness which subsequently gets transformed to hostility towards others. The downtrodden were even deprived of their basic rights of self preservation and self survival by the high caste.

The marriage between Arun and Jyoti proves to be a cultural shock for both of them. There exists a huge cultural gap between the two. Arun receives inevitably a cultural shock in the Devlalikar house, very much like Jyoti after marriage in his dalit hut, and their marriage only widens the gap beyond repair.

**Patriarchy:** The presence of patriarchy can be felt in the title itself. *Kanyadaan* is an important aspect of the age old Hindu marriages. This sacrificial aspect means 'the giving
away of the daughter forever.' This religious and cultural procedure indicates a shift of the 
female body from one position of familiarity to an opposite, from where she can never make 
a return. At the end of the play, Jyoti's complete submission to the violence perpetrated on her 
by her husband asserts this. She deliberately chooses to become a docile and ideal wife, to 
call her husband's people and home her own and mutely suffers the physical, psychological 
and sexual violence inflicted on her. As mentioned earlier, she has imbibed all the principles 
provided by her father, but at the end of the day, her paternal house remains Nath Devlalikar's 
home. Her shift from the status of daughter to that of a wife does not bring any qualitative 
change in her life. As Joydeep Bhattacharyya comments:

The career of Jyoti invites critical intervention here because she seems to 
exemplify an oppressed femininity that undergoes masculine articulation in 
two different domains, her father's home and husband's. Her subjectivity is 
conditioned by two different expressions of male power, both of which seem 
to encourage the formation of her docile identity for the success of their 
multifarious agenda.(92)

**Gender:** This age- old process of asymmetrical construction of feminine identity is an 
outcome of gender bias. The female body has always been targeted in any relation of power, 
but at the time of an overt conflict this becomes crudely visible. When Jyoti suffers, her 
father encourages her to move ahead with his revolutionary method. It seems to be a case of 
gender manipulation which produces loyal subject like Jyoti. In both the phases of her career, 
the male power utilizes the manipulated feminine subjectivity for other social purposes-- 
Nath's social reformation and Arun's caste assertion.

**Power and Violence:** Tendulkar in his treatment of social issues unleashes those elements 
which lead to the mechanization of power. The play exhibits the manifold politics of casteism
as a factor for the sustenance of an oppressive structure of society. The worst victim of power practice is Jyoti who becomes a battleground on which the two representational agencies, Nath and Arun, struggle for their aspirations of power. There is the execution of male power in the two phases of her life. This male power takes an ugly, coercive, and overt turn in the case of Arun, whereas in Nath, it remains veiled under the sophistication of modern paternal caring. In case of Arun, it seems to be a combined force of masculine and Dalit who resorts to physical violence to establish his authority over a subject who is woman as well as Brahmin. He assaults Jyoti physically to inflict wound on Nath, or in a broader sense, to the greater upper caste community held responsible by his shared memory of the past for the age-old exploitation of his people. He is a husband who uses his manhood to nurture his identity of master inside the security of his home. The encounter between Arun and Seva gives an insight into the hegemonic power mechanism of higher castes. The violence projected in the play is three dimensional: physical, psychological and verbal.

Conflicts in the play: In Kanyadaan, the social obligations and personal relations are synthesized to create strong dramatic situations. The simultaneous existence of the personal relationships and social convention makes the dramatic conflict more intense. There is an internal conflict in each character confronting the societal commitments and personal choices. Nath's humanist enterprise for the Dalit and Arun's reactionary Dalit politics are the two narrative forces already involved in the greater outdoor world of politics are brought inside a domestic domain to understand this conflict on a personal and micro level. The play is a conflict between idealism and realism.

Changes in social structure, culture and literature have, definitely taken place in the contemporary Indian society but a major revolution is yet to occur. The Dalits have become highly educated in independent India but their psyche has not considerably changed whereas the higher caste in contemporary India is still governed and guided by 'Manusmriti'. None of
the two is willing to accept the other. Though ample opportunities and rights in education, government jobs, politics, society and religion have been given to the Dalits, they still continue to see their age old oppressors in the high class community as is evident by the furor caused by the suicide of a Dalit student, Rohit Vemula at Hyderabad university. Such incidents prove that the play is still relevant and caste divide continues to decide the social, political and cultural scenario of the country. For Tendulkar, the play is 'the admission of defeat and intellectual confusion'. To quote the master playwright himself:

Nath Devlalikar the protagonist of *Kanyadaan* is me and many other liberals of my generation whom I understand completely. The pain of these people today, the defeat they have suffered, the fundamental mental confusion and naivete that has led to their pain and defeat, these form the theme of *Kanyadaan*; and I wrote about it because it came so close to me. qut. in Gokhale 50)

### 3.8. *Encounter in Umbugland. (Dambadwipcha Mukabala)*

*Dambadwipcha Mukabala* is one of Tendulkar's first political plays. He would write others later, like *Ghashiram Kotwal* which would give rise to much furor, but *Mukabala* has a unique freshness of treatment, unlike other political satires, a kind of objective yet human outlook, that raises it above just another topical, political play. (Banerjee 575)

A play written and produced a year after *Shantata!, Encounter in Umbugland* is completely of different nature. First staged on 10 December, 1969, the play is essentially a political allegory in which the reflections of the political situation in India of the late sixties
and early seventies in the royalist regime of Umbugland (Dambdwip) can be easily traced, but this does not mean that the play is merely topical and bereft of human emotions. It unveils the essential nature of the game of politics as also the basic craving for power in human nature. The powerful satire built by Tendulkar through the creation of a fictitious milieu, exposes the intricate political intrigues designed to attain positions of authority and the corruption involved in holding on to them.

The satirical nature of the play is apparent from the verbal play in the title of the original Marathi version which has been very successfully maintained by Priya Adarkar in the English translation also. Literally, the word 'dambadwip' means 'the island of damb', but due to its phonetic closeness with 'dambh' (meaning hypocrisy in Hindi/ Marathi), it also suggests 'the island of hypocrisy'. This play of words is also preserved in the title of the English version with the silent 'H' in the word 'Umbugland' (as 'humbug' in English means hypocrisy). The play is about the encounter in Umbugland between the Queen Vijaya and the ministers of the land. More significantly, it is about the evolution of Princess Vijaya from a self-willed, garrulous, mischievous and playful girl into an ambitious dictator, Queen Vijaya. It is the study of the transformation which power brings in an individual.

The play opens with the ceremony of sixtieth anniversary of King Vichitravirya's coronation. Prannarayan, the eunuch, welcomes all to the ceremony. He describes Umbugland as an island country ruled by the powerful monarch, King Vichitravirya. Then appear two pen bearers who act as the chorus and describe the glory of the king. Prannarayan is attendant to Princess Vijaya, the only daughter of the King. He is not only an attendant for her but is also a philosopher guide to her. They have an intimate relationship and he takes care of her like a mother.

Vratyasom, Bhagadanta, Karkashirsha, Pishtakeshi and Aranyaketu are the cabinet
ministers of the King. He treats them with scant respect. Though they resent his dictatorial attitude, they cannot protest him as the King enjoys the public support. Moreover there is no unity among the Ministers who all desire to rule the kingdom after the king's death. They are all corrupt and are portrayed by Tendulkar as typical politicians. Their true nature is revealed in the conversation among them. In the words of Karkashirsha, Vratyasom is involved in thirteen acts of official dishonesty. Vratyasom justifies his corrupt practice saying, "principles and honesty. To observe these two virtues in politics is as inappropriate and stupid as celibacy after marriage. You and I are politicians . . . It means we are partners in a most profitable game of skulduggery"(273). Pishtakeshi agrees with him saying, "In politics one should have the hide of a rhinoceros . . ."(273).

King Vichitravirya accuses them of dereliction of duty, "Power seems more important to you than duty. Selfish designs have replaced service . . ." (278). Princess Vijaya is referred to as 'childish and half-witted' by her father. King Vichitravirya wants a portrait of himself to be painted. The painter paints the portrait and finishes his work only to find that the king is seated dead. The question of succession arises after the sudden demise of the king. The critical situation is discussed by the ministers who fail to arrive at a consensus because each of them has an eye on the throne. The two pen bearers announce an account of the development of the crisis caused by the political vacuum created by king's death in the newspapers of Umbugland asking, "After Vichitravirya who?" (284).

Tendulkar, himself a journalist, here targets, as he does in Kamala, the newspaper reporters who ensure greater circulation of newspapers by means of sensational reporting. The ministers, meanwhile, continue their struggle to rise to power. Failed to reach at any consensus, the ministers decide to raise Princess Vijaya to power as a compromise candidate. They consider her to be nothing more than their rubber stamp and planned to rule by proxy. They think that the innocent daughter of the king would be quite content to be no more than
that as Vratyasom confesses, "His Majesty's heir: This one in front, five of us behind: She'll be the rule, we'll be the rulers" (293).

Initially, Vjaya is a youthful, immature girl, who loves has no understanding of political games. When the cabinet wants to meet her she asks them to wait outside. To this Prannarayan advises her to be diplomatic in her dealings saying, "Insult them, but don't wound their egos. And diplomatic language!". To which she responds saying, "In other words, lies. The opposite of what one feels" (299). The transformation of Princess Vijaya to Queen Vijaya has begun. She harangues them about the decrees they want her to sign. The ministers who thought that she would never cross the line they have drawn for her are irked by her growing independence. They are infuriated by her visit and interaction with the Kadamba, the native tribe of Umbugland. The hopes of the ministers to rule Umbugland behind a puppet are shattered as Vijaya asserts her individuality.

The rift between the throne and the council widens over the plan for rehabilitation of the Kadamba tribe. The violent discontent of the neglected native tribe has always been declared as 'treason' against Umbugland by the selfish ministers. Vijaya says that the plan will, "raise my stature on the island. I will get the credit for achieving what has never been achieved before" (317). The plan is opposed by the council claiming that the Kadambas are traitors and do not deserve any help or support. Karkashirsha, Vratyasom and Pishtakeshi openly opposes the plan. Thus ensues the confrontation between Her Majesty and her Ministers. The situation is reported by the Pen-Bearers as: "All eyes centre upon the Encounter: all eyes centre upon the Encounter" (327).

When Vijaya, brushing aside the objections of the council announces the implementation of her plan, the Ministers are outraged by her authoritarian way saying that, "She's born dictator!" (331). The infuriated ministers plans a conspiracy against the Queen.
They decide to incite the mob against the Queen hoping that she will submit.

Queen Vijaya intelligently outwits them by bringing a rift among their ranks. She smartly brings Bhagadanta and Aranyaketu to her side. The palace is besieged by a mob. The ministers, except Bhagadanta and Aranyaketu, watch the stone-throwing mob from a room in the palace. When they notice Vijaya's presence they suggest her to go out and pacify the agitated mob. To this she orders Karkashirsha, "it is a decree from the throne that the Cabinet should go out and try to pacify the crowd"(350).

Not knowing what to do, they tell her that the crowd wants to abdicate. Vijaya asks Prannarayan to send Bhagadanta out in the mob. They are terrified to see the way Bhagadanta is manhandled by the crowd. On hearing that he mob is about to set fire to the palace she decides to go out and face the mob. When Vijaya goes out, Vratyasom, Karkashirsha and Pishtakeshi are delighted but the gradual lessening of the noise creates discomfiture in them. They are shocked and speechless when the Queen re-enters followed by Prannarayan. She narrates to them what has happened:

We said," We shall institute a public enquiry into the private property of our Ministers, who have today gone against the interests of the people" . . . We shouted, 'Down with the Cabinet' . . . We shouted, 'Down with the Plan- and the Ministers who made it.' . . . While the crowd was shouting your names, we promised to hand you over to them, and to meet them from time to time hereafter. And then we left to the sound of cheering. (353-54)

She orders them to go out and face the people. The Ministers are extremely terrified to hear this. They dare not to go out and beg for protection from the Queen, who has already arranged a burkha for them to escape safely. The play ends with the Queen gaining complete control over her Cabinet which is reported by the Pen-Bearers as 'a miracle in Umbugland.'
**Realism** : The question 'After Vichitraviyra, who?' echoes 'After Nehru, who?' - an issue widely debated in India in the 1960s. There are many incidents in the play that resembles the political situation of the then India. To quote Arundhati Banerjee:

> ... it is easy to identify the characters with political figures who held ministerial positions in those years-the 'principled' politician who spouts moral platitudes; his antitype, a blatantly immoral character; the statesman whose face is stretched in a constant smile and who gesticulates wildly but at the same time is taciturn to a fault; the floor-crosser who pretends to be ill and sits on the fence till the eleventh hour. And of course, there is the indomitable Princess Vijaya, herself the daughter of an autocratic king, ... (574)

**Gynocentrism** : The central character of the play, Queen Vijaya is portrayed with utmost care by Tendulkar. The play is the story of her transformation from a headstrong, self-opinionated but politically inexperienced young princess to an intelligent yet whimsical ruler who devises her own methods to vanquish her rivals. The human aspect of her nature is reflected in her highly complex but interesting relationship with Prannarayan, the eunuch.

**A Play of Power-Politics** : Vijay Tendulkar is not content with merely allegorizing the political events, he exposes the world of politics, a world which is a synonym of hypocrisy. The play provides an array of the dirty games played in politics. The play is full of utterances that reveals the real faces of the politicians. Karkashirsha denies to know any common man saying that:

> KARKASHIRSHA. I'm sorry-don't know any of the common people in part of the island, let alone in my own. The unprincipled, defective, spineless,
vapid, stupid, and baseborn faces I meet in the road or at political assemblies-

VRATYASOM. Even if the description is somewhat exaggerated, that is what the dictionary of politics calls the common people.(334)

When Aranyaketu expresses his apprehension of bloodshed, Vyatyasom retorts in the following words:

ARANYAKETU. But the destruction of innocent lives and valuable property-

VRATYASOM. For an inexperienced politician, you use embarrassing greatest terminology. Destruction brings change. Anyone who cannot watch even the destruction dispassionately is in my opinion no politician at all . . .

(335)

The play also targets media for its sensational reporting. Tendulkar has used two masked actors, armed with outsized pens, who arrive at regular intervals providing objective observations on the recent developments in the political situation of Umbugland. In these hackneyed remarks an echo of the cynical tone of the newspaper headlines can be heard which resolve nothing but aggravate the existing problems.

Conflicts: The play is about the natural human instinct of thirst for power and if achieved, the passion to hold it. The play is about the encounter between the Crown and the Cabinet to attain maximum power. The play is a thesis of the ugliness and futility of the power game. The central concern of the play is - 'Strive for empowerment.'

Conclusion: This dramatic incarnation of the political scenario of India in late sixties is a portraiture of the various dimensions of power game which politicians continue to play till date. The issues presented in the play can easily be traced in the present political situation of
India. Issues like deterioration of human values, thirst for political power, double crossing, gender politics still define the structure of political relationships. The political chaos and passivity of politicians are responsible for the perpetual suffering of humanity. *Encounter in Umbugland*, though not a major achievement of Tendulkar in terms of thematic scope but is significant in his total dramatic output, for this political allegory with its probe into the workings of power prepares the way for *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the masterpiece, where the operations of power are fully spelt out.

### 3.9. *A Friend's Story (Mitrachi Goshta)*

Beena Agrawal, in her article "Lesbianism and the Psyche of Discontent in *A Friend's Story*" observes that: "For appropriate dramatic situations, Tendulkar depends on the experiences that can express the moments of supreme personal crisis representing the conflict of the individual with his inner self against the well organized socio-ethical paradigms" (164).

After successfully portraying the perpetual clash of human existence against the oppressive social strategies like gender prejudice, commercialization of press and personal relationships, caste discrimination, sacrosanct nature of the institution of marriage and corruption in politics, Tendulkar uses his pen to investigate the crisis of homosexuals, whom the society treats as sick and immoral, in *A Friend's Story*. The homosexuals are marginalized in the society as it permits the relationships among the heterosexuals. The play, first performed on 15 August 1981, at Gadkari Rangayatan, Thane, Maharashtra, is about a lesbian relationship. The pathos and anguish of such a relation was presented in great detail for the first time on the Marathi stage. The serious and sensitive handling of the topic by Tendulkar provides the audience a unique dramatic experience through introspection. The
play is focused around the struggle of a young girl Sumitra who suffers from an imbalance in personality of being feminine in appearance but masculine in thinking, feeling and behavior. The play highlights the crisis of those whose identities cannot be defined in terms of gender defined roles.

Act I of the play begins with Bapu's address to the audience. Bapu is the chief narrator, who is narrating the love story of his friend, Sumitra Dev alias Mitra Singh. Bapu was in his first year in college when Sumitra came from elsewhere and joined the college as a second year B.A student. He describes her as "different from all the other girls." He adds: "Her entire personality had a natural, aggressive masculinity, but with a figure irresistibly attractive to men" (419).

Bapu, an average student, confesses that he could not even think to be anywhere near Sumitra. To be a friend to her was like a dream for a shy and simple boy like him. One day, co-incidentally he found a photograph of Sumitra and picked it up. While gazing at the photograph he was surprised and repulsed by turns. He expresses his astonishment in the following words: "Is she a woman at all? Look at that dress! And who are those hairy, bare-chested men with cigarettes in their mouths?" (420). This observation by Bapu reflects that Sumitra, like other protagonists of Tendulkar, is unconventional.

Bapu decides to return her the photograph. He meets her and hands over the photograph to her. In contrast to his nervousness, Sumitra is quite confident and takes the initiative to ask his name and invites him to have a cup of tea. She prefers to address him with his pet name Bapu than to call him Shrikant Marathe. She asks him to call her 'Mitra' instead of Sumitra. This may suggest that she is determined to negate her feminine identity as 'Mitra' echoes a masculine flavor. Sumitra is bold, vigorous an unconventional but amicable. One day Sumitra asks Bapu to meet in the evening at the open ground. On reaching there, she
looks tense and perplexed. He is confused and disturbed. Suddenly she takes hold of Bapu's hand and presses it hard, savagely. This the first confession of her identity as a lesbian. Sumitra asks him: "What did you feel when I held your hand? Did you feel anything? How did my hand feel to you?" (425).

During the conversation, Sumitra tries to confirm her identity, through the responses of Bapu. At the same time, the chain of statements also reveals the insecurity existing within her psyche. When Bapu promises that he won't leave her, she says, "Don't think it's easy. You don't know me. If you get to know me, you'll just scram." This statement of her hints at the reactions and responses that lesbians go through at the hands of the society. Bapu too confesses: "After that I felt giddy. And the urge to get my hand free at any cost. When she left I experienced a boundless joy, of the kind I'd never known before" (425, 426).

He does not want to share the secret of his relationship with Sumitra even to his roommate Pande. One day Pande comes and informs Bapu that Mitra has attempted suicide. She has swallowed sleeping pills but she is alive. Unable to restrain himself to be away from the hospital, Bapu goes to visit her. She appeared someone altogether different to him. Days passed. She resumes the college. When Bapu wants to meet her, Sumitra enquires if he wants to know the reason behind her suicidal attempt. Bapu denies. When they meet in the evening, he couldn't restrain himself from asking her the reason. She decides to disclose her real self before him but in her own way.

She tells him that there was a girl. When she attained the age of puberty, her family members got worried and became strict too. The rigid rules of social restrictions and traditions were imposed on her. Finally they decided to get her married with a decent boy. The family members created the opportunities for them to meet. But when she met the boy, she felt no physical thrill, no excitement. She found the whole thing rather bizarre. Sumitra
continues, "She asked herself why she didn't feel the way other girls did. Why did I feel so completely at home in the company of men? Why did I never feel shy?". To arrive at a conclusion she decides to perform an experiment- an experiment in which she tried to have the physical proximity of her servant. The results were devastating for her. She discovered that "she could never become a man's partner in this" (432, 433)

The realization of the absurdity of her own existence and the agony of this reality made her so restless that she found death as the only means to escape the horrors of her own existence. She survived anyway. Further, she adopts the mechanism of social withdrawal as a remedy of her undesirable alternative identity. This was the revelation of its own kind for Bapu. He kept on reflecting for some time. He discusses the matter with his friend Pande without making any reference to Sumitra. Pande's reaction voices the attitude of the society towards the lesbians: "Hey, look here bastard, don't tell me you got stuck with a bitch like that!" Pande continues: "So let them hang! Why d' you start the morning with such dirty talk? Shall I tell you . . . ? You've seen them clapping and dancing haven't you? Eunuchs . . . they're like that. Frigid. Got it?" (435)

Pande informs Bapu that he has been appointed as the secretary of the drama committee and the principal wants two plays to be performed- one with an all male and other with an all female cast. Pande requests Bapu to convince Mitra to do the male role in the later play. When Bapu refuses to do so, Pande himself convinces her to do the role. Nama, another girl of Bapu's class is supposed to play the heroine. Mitra, due to her ambiguous personality, feels attracted towards Nama during the performance. Her suppressed masculine instincts come alive in the feminine company of Nama. This dramatic crisis becomes more intense and complicated when Pande, unaware of Mitra's reality, feels fascinated towards her. He requests Bapu to fix a meeting with Mitra as he cannot live without her. It becomes difficult for Bapu to reconcile the two extremes of Sumitra and Pande as both of them are being
governed by strong personal drives.

Meanwhile, Mitra is obsessed with Nama as her instinctive urges exists beyond the control of her rational self. Her lesbian tendencies takes over her during the drama rehearsals. She becomes surer of herself and makes a confession of her feelings for Nama "I knew I didn't want a man. I need a woman. I'm different, different . . ." (440). She becomes so impatient that she requests Bapu to let her share his room with Nama so that she could spend some moments of privacy with her.

On Mitra's insistence, Bapu agrees to get rid of Pande for a while and manage his room for her but Nama didn't turn up. Sumitra shares this with Bapu who consoles her that he will talk to Nama. She believes that Nama is avoiding her because of Manya Dalvi, her boyfriend. Her frustration takes the form of stubbornness, "I won't let her go" (448). Her overwhelming desire to posses Nama becomes violent. Her fury is transformed into violence and the violence is assuming the form of sadism. Her conflicting traits become the reason of her unbearable mental anguish. She seems to be struggling against invisible forces beyond her control. She becomes almost a psychopath.

Meanwhile, Pande's obsession for Mitra is at its extreme. He begins to return to the room dead drunk, confessing, "I can't live without her or die without her. Bapu, I am doomed" (449). The plot of the play starts getting complex. Bapu is placed at the centre, trying to resist and balance the abnormal passions of other characters. While Mitra, to get rid of Dalvi, forges Bapu's handwriting and writes anonymous letters to Namita blackening Dalvi's name. Dalvi suspects Bapu responsible for those letters and becomes hostile to Bapu. Bapu meets Sumitra and expresses his anger. At this stage the situation becomes really complicated. However, driven by her uncontrolled passion, Mitra is unable to figure out the consequences of her own actions. She admits forging Bapu's handwriting and posting the
letters from his area. She behaves fanatically and defies all ethics. The conflict in Bapu's mind increases as both Pande and Mitra were struggling in their own way. Pande has lost himself in drink. Bapu feels sorry for him and decides to reveal the whole truth so that at least he could be helped out. He reveals to Pande: "I mean- she's different. She's homo, a homo. I mean, she likes only women" (455).

Later on, Bapu informs the audience that Pande got a commission and left for the battle. Now Mitra is free to visit Bapu's room openly. Sometimes she brings Nama with her who seems very happy in her company. The situation becomes tensed on one occasion when Dalvi arrives at the room when Sumitra and Nama are alone in the room. Dalvi looks like a hunter and calls her a 'lesbian bitch', while Nama, frightened, leaves the room with Dalvi.

Afterwards, Nama comes to Bapu's room and asks about Mitra. Bapu, out of curiosity, asks her whose side she really is- Mitra or Dalvi? Nama feels herself caught between two powerful and conflicting currents. Mitra and Nama resume coming to Bapu's room. The situation gets complicated when Dalvi asks him to provide the room to him and Nama as their usual arrangements have broken down. This was a new problem for Bapu who decides to write a letter to Pande sharing everything and feels lighter. When Bapu informs Mitra about Dalvi's plan she gets wild. Fed up with all these troubles, Bapu decides to vacate the room and requests Mitra not to involve him in the mess anymore. Mitra gets annoyed at this and leaves.

Act III focuses on the close friendship of Bapu and Sumitra. Bapu has shifted to another place with two roommates. Sumitra comes and asks for some money from Bapu. He gives her the money but wonders why she has to come to him for money as she belongs to a well-to-do family. Meanwhile, an outing is organized by the college in which Nama and Bapu go. There, for the first time, the mental crisis of Nama is revealed:
Don't know how to say it ... because it's quite weird ... (Avoids looking at him. Then, as if under some great compulsion.) Whenever we are together ... she ... asks me about Dalvi and myself ... that is ... that is how we ... we ... enjoy.(Finding it extraordinarily difficult to speak but comes out with it.) She can't take it if I refuse to ... her whole face changes ... I get scared ... I don't like all this ... (Wipes her eyes.) (470)

Nama admits that sometimes she feels suffocated in Mitra's company. Bapu feels that all this is wrong and makes his last effort to correct the things. He writes a letter to Mitra telling "what you depend on is not so dependable." Sumitra reacts strongly to this saying that she will not let Nama go. She says: "I can make our relationship public. I can break her marriage proposal. If she leaves me, she has nowhere to go. Understand?" (471). She is adamant that she won't let Nama marry. Bapu calls it a blackmail and realizes that he has stopped liking Mitra. Once again he writes to Pande. He feels sympathy for Nama but rage towards Mitra.

When he returns back from his vacation he comes to know that the affair of Sumitra and Nama has become a public scandal. Someone has published their story in a magazine changing their names. He contacts Mitra who is very hurt as Nama has denied everything and has put all the blame on her. She tells Bapu that the previous day, she had waited for her till ten in the night at the cycle repairman's house but she didn't turn up. Bapu feels worried about alone, isolated Mitra.

Pande comes back, recovered after he was shot, to do the clerical work at the army headquarters. Dalvi informs Bapu that Mitra's father has settled the whole matter quietly without rustication. Revengeful Dalvi threatens that he will dispatch letters to any college where she gets admission and won't let her take admission anywhere else. Bapu feels
disgusted at this. Meanwhile, Nama comes to Bapu and informs that her marriage has been fixed in Calcutta and she'll be leaving for Calcutta the very next morning. She requests Bapu not to reveal this to Mitra. But Bapu, in spite of his self control could not resist himself from revealing the truth of Nama's departure to Sumitra who becomes wild on listening this. Bapu, being a true friend, tries to control and direct the responses of Mitra. He consoles her. While he plans the reorientation of Mitra, she driven by her uncontrolled desires leaves for Calcutta to follow Nama. Bapu is stunned at her response. He feels that she has cheated him. He feels completely deceived and breaks his friendship with her when she returns.

Sumitra has left the college. Bapu tries to concentrate on his studies. Dalvi and Pande come and take Bapu to army club. Pande informs Bapu that Mitra has been thrown out of her house and stays in the women's hostel. Dalvi, still hostile towards Mitra, comments viciously that he won't let her stay even in the hostel. He calls Mitra, 'a worm, a termite, she's a bitch.' Bapu retaliates and calls Dalvi a worm. A hot talk takes place between the two and Dalvi calls him 'Mitra's pimp.' At this Pande interferes and informs that Mitra comes regularly at the army club. Bapu questions why she comes, to which Pande answers: "Why does anyone come to the club? To drink . . . costly foreign maal . . . you are sure to get it here . . . and free at that. Today this officer - tomorrow that officer. They get her drink and . . ." (490)

Bapu does not believe who asks him to wait there and see it for himself. Sumitra enters, dressed in outrageous costume and lipstick, joins two army officers who are drinking. She is constantly plied with drinks by both men. Sumitra, heavily drunk, is not conscious of her saree having slipped down from her shoulder. The men are having their usual fun. Bapu very restive. Sumitra, under the impact of alcohol, expresses her pent up emotions:

I'm a whore! A lesbian, do you know that? A lesbian bitch! A freak! He says - don't lie, don't depend on me . . . wrote off the money, wrote off! Friendship
is over, he said. All right, let it be over. Who lied? I lied? I didn't lie-not to him. I lied to my mother, but not him. You know that? Told him what I didn't tell anyone. He-he was my mother. Mother-Bapu. Mother-Bapu . . . (492)

Bapu watches as if in a trance. The officers carry Sumitra out with bearer's help. Pande comments," Know what those bastards will be doing to her?" Bapu is very disturbed and restless. He is in a dilemma: "Couldn't decide whether I had done right or wrong. Was it wrong to have cut Mitra from my life?" (493)

Bapu learns to get on without Mitra. He does not meet Pande either. He begins to concentrate on his studies. Dalvi comes and casually informs Bapu that Mitra has committed suicide last night. Bapu has drained out of life. He shouts at Dalvi saying that ,"You go to heaven now and tell everyone, drive out the lesbian. Drive out the bitch" (494). He is in a state of turmoil. Dead silence. Bapu slums slowly to the ground with his head between his knees. Slowly, light fades away.

Tendulkar's effort to dramatize the issue of lesbians in theatre marks the dawn of new possibilities of Indian theatre to expose a more unconventional and dynamic vision of life hither to unknown in Indian drama. It is not a sentimental quest to feed the interest of westernized Indian audience only but it is also an effort to make spaces for those human experiences that have universal significance at the global level beyond the echoes of native cultural traditions. (Agrawal 180)

_A Friend's Story_, like other plays of Tendulkar, has its genesis in a real life experience of the playwright. In the Preface of the play, Tendulkar admits that, "I was in my teens when
the woman who became Mitra in *A Friend's Story* came into my life*" (Bandyopadhyay xiv).

He had seen her on stage in Pune in the early 1940s, performing a male role. After many years, Tendulkar had a new friend who was an actor and had been a friend to the woman during their college days. Tendulkar, in Preface to *Collected Plays in Translation* shares: "He used to act in plays with an all-male cast at annual days in college, and Mitra used to play the male in plays with an all-female cast. My actor friend helped Mitra in situations which she had shared only with him" (Bandopadhyay xv).

Tendulkar came to know from his friend that she had a craving for a girl and had an affair with her which ended in a major crisis. It practically finished her life. Tendulkar remembered the shock waves and the confusion produced in his young mind. In the mid 50s, he wrote a short story titled *Mitra* with the same structure as the play written years later. It was the story of a relationship between a boy who has just touched twenty and a slightly older young woman who fascinates and frightens him at the same time. The boy is the narrator who shares his experience. In those days, writing and staging a play based on same-sex relationship was out of question. Yet the play *Mitra* materialized. Tendulkar confesses that: "The play got written in spite of me" (Bandopadhyay xvi).

**Socio-individual Tensions**: In the play, Tendulkar asserts through the crisis of Mitra that lesbianism is not a self chosen ideology but is a realization of a distinctive identity. Sumitra was 'different', different from all the others in the play. Rohini Hattangady, who played the leading role of Mitra when the play was staged, accepts in Note on a *A Friend's Story* in *Collected Plays in Translation* that the subject of the play has almost been unpalatable. Sumitra, the protagonist stands apart from the conventions in which she is placed to survive. She comments: "Sumitra, that is Mitra, being 'different' is the core (essence) of the play. The reactions of the people around her, her friend, her lover, her lover's boyfriend—in fact Mitra's rival, and a boy who is fond of Mitra; show the reactions of the society through representative
characters-and then the end, which is inevitable" (592).

Through the dramatic structure of the play, Tendulkar tries to bring to surface the curiosity of people about homosexuality that lies latent in their psyche. Bapu reflects: "Do such women exist? Are they born like that or do they get conditioned as they grow to be what they are? Is it an ailment or a human trait of a particular kind? What would happen to Mitra? It was bizarre, repulsive and abhorrent. There was no need to talk about it but I couldn't keep it to myself" (434).

Dalvi and Pande represent the attitude of the society as a whole. Bapu is the main support for her. When they have a fight over her Calcutta trip, their friendship breaks. For, her it is not a breaking away from Bapu but breaking away from herself- from her being 'Mitra'. After this, she tries to change her personality, tries to be 'feminine' but is unable to do so and one day commits suicide. Her suicide asserts that the lesbians suffer with perpetual pangs of fluid identity which makes their survival difficult and they seek refuge by escaping from the trap of conventions that enhance their suffering. Tendulkar, in A Friend's Story, defies the close fisted morality of the society and offers the possibilities of liberal and unconventional modes of friendship as that of Bapu's. Bapu's friendship with Mitra is the humane aspect of the play. The playwright tries to understand Mitra through Bapu. When Bapu fails to understand her, the end becomes inevitable. When he tries to explain her, his exhortation are in context of social mechanism but he forgets that the natural instincts of Mitra are beyond the control of any kind of social norms.

The anguish of Mitra is because of her helplessness to conform with the rigid codes of ethics recommended in society. The social conventions, that definitely are constructed to sustain balance in relationships, are often confronted with human psyche whose fluid state rejects them. Lesbianism, often labeled as immoral and abnormal, is inevitably associated
with the question of one's identity. Mitra in spite of being totally aware of her unnatural urges, is unable to resist them. Tendulkar, through *A Friend's Story* suggests that being gay or lesbian is not right or wrong, it is a reality which should be accepted and people must learn to live with them.

**Gender** : The play highlights the crisis of those whose identity can't be defined in terms of gender defined roles. To make them a part of the mainstream, the reorientation of the whole society is required. Nama's involvement with Mitra is confusing. She likes being with Mitra, seems happy in her company but at the same time feels chained up with her. She finds it difficult to cope with her but is unable to reject her totally. Human psyche sustains its own autonomy of thoughts but its exhibition beyond morally accepted code is immoral and anti social. Homosexuality is always deemed as a 'sickness'-as an abnormal behavior. The binary of gender relationship is based on the assumption of a 'natural' heterosexuality. Gender is "always hetero gender, the asymmetric stratification of sexes in relation to the institution of patriarchal heterosexuality" (Agrawal 167). Tendulkar asserts that lesbians are marginalized and to bring them in main stream, it is essential to acknowledge their human identity beyond gender specified roles.

**Conflicts in the play** :

He (Tendulkar) conceives the fabric of his plays with the assumption that human existence is futile against the predefined social codes and the whole secret of human survival consists in seeking a balance between unacknowledged - ID-centered anti conventional human behavior and morally aware super ego-centered self expressed in terms of social norms. Hence most of the characters conceived by Tendulkar make a relentless struggle against the conventions that hinder their 'basic choices' and stir them to make spaces
beyond the conventions. (Agrawal 164)

In the name of social considerations, the other characters exerts pressure on Mitra and try to direct her instincts. Not surrendering to the pressures of the society, she opts to be aggressive and follows her instincts openly. Within this framework of the play, Tendulkar explores "violence, sensuality, wickedness that reside in human nature" (Agrawal 165). Mitra follows her natural instincts against the social ethics. Her stubborn nature, her desire to do what she wants and then her rebellion give rise to a sort of social conflict. At the same time, this contradictory situation generates a kind of mental conflict in her. She tries to fight her own battle, but when unable to continue it, she gives up and ends her life. The conflict in the play is intense because the problem of Mitra is a clash between personal sentiments and social inhibitions.

The other characters are also placed in conflicting situations of different kinds. Firstly, there is Bapu who is caught up in the conflict of Mitra's friendship. Secondly, Pande is in conflict of when he comes to know the person he is in love with, is a lesbian. Then there is Nama who is at the center of two powerful currents- Mitra and Dalvi, unable to decide 'which way to go'. Dalvi is in conflict with Sumitra as he can't let his love defeated by a lesbian like Mitra.

*A Friend's Story* is an unconventional attempt in the realm of Indian drama as it is a dramatic representation of a taboo relationship on the stage. The play narrates the misery of the sexually marginalized section and the struggle between their inner self in confrontation with socio-ethical paradigms as the society has not yet accepted the identity of gays, lesbians and homosexuals who are destined to lead a secluded life in their claustrophobic spaces, as one of them. The struggle taking place within Mitra, when her inner invisible self challenges the established social norms, gives rise to extremely tense, highly poignant and emotionally
critical dramatic situations. The lesbians are considered marginalized politically, immoral socially and abnormal psychologically.

Recent scenario has not changed considerably though metropolitan cities have instances where gays and lesbians live together, at large such incidents are not frequent and yet not acceptable that is why one comes across instances very often where two friends attached desperately to each other commit suicide when about to be separated. Certain attempts have recently been made to abolish article 377 of the Indian Penal Code which labels homosexuality a criminal offence. Since the society permits sexual relations among heterosexuals, homosexuality has been shunned as deviant and even criminal. In a traditional society, these kinds of deviations from established ideologies cannot be even thought of.