CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Indian culture is extremely complex and fascinating, as enshrined within is the peculiar amalgam of tradition and modernity that invariably constitutes the multiplicity of subcultures and languages. Indian multiculturalism cannot be pinned down by “fissiparous tendencies”, with the blinkered perspective of the journalistic register. The common elements of “Indianness” notwithstanding, each of the subcultures constitute an inimitable value system. The intellectual and cultural movements in India were stimulated by religious motives, but the influence of Western culture on the educated middle class served as a unifying factor. English language and Westernized life style indeed served as a common alliance among the Indian elitist circles. The simultaneous co-existence of tradition and modernity renders uniqueness to the Indian culture today.

Conversely, the mosaic of subcultures constituting the United States of America has given rise to the concept of “Cultural Pluralism”. If India reaps its cultural fertility from indigenous languages and tradition, America as a nation of nations gains its identity from its multiple streams of immigrant groups. Although the presence of subcultures in India may not be collateral to the American scenario, these variations in India proceed from the Muslim and Christian cultures that modify the ancient racial settlements. In turn these multicultural variations have contributed to the richness and color of the Indian and American cultures respectively. Despite the ethnicity of their society, Americans are homogenized by mass mediated consumer culture. In India the extent of such homogenization varies in degree but the change is inevitable and decipherable. Any comparison of two works of culture or literary writings would imply an attempt of inter-cultural interpretation. Such comparison is ineluctable for various reasons, first the Indian critics, largely academics are either educated in the West or even in Universities of the home town, and the curriculum is largely westernized. Second, the Indian writers being exposed to English and Western traditions render cross-culturality indispensable. D. Ramakrishna makes a pedagogical statement “The Indian culture today is an amalgam of the two traditions—the Hindu–Brahmanical and the Leavisite Eliotism; the Hindu myths
and social protests and the higher technologies of New India. Both in Indian English Literature and its criticism one finds this paradoxical combination” (Ramkrishna 2005: 65). This clearly manifests a cultural and literary exchange between the two countries and is reflected in all aspects of life as well. In the introduction to India’s literary History, Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia rightly assert that “when European literary idioms reached India, they did not enter a literary vacuum; rather they came into contact with popular performance forms and complex literary cultures that themselves had histories, produced in constant interaction between regions within India and beyond, particularly in the 17th and 18th centuries” (Blackburn and Dalmia 2004: 8). These intercultural exchanges disallow any attempts to categorize ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ as static or monolithic realities but subscribe to the view that tradition and modernity were built and mediated through the complex, cultural interactions that characterize the present century. Consequentially the new emergent forms of literature acquired a re-imagined literary past, that once engraved in print media, engendered a new literary, historical sensibility in the post-modern context.

As the postmodern art reflects new aesthetic arrangements of social attitudes, the new social arrangements elicited a new artistic openness and surpassed parochialism. The interaction and symbiosis between the margin and the mainstream nurtured the acceptance of new voices. As Josephine Hendin acclaims “Cultural interpenetration has enabled a sense of modernity as experience of multiversity: a polyglot urban linguistics, a close interaction between premodern cultures of heritage or immigration and the ultra modern city, and even an imaginative incorporation of mystical, magical mythologies and the commercial, technological culture of the United States” (Hendin 2004: 16).

The anxieties and fears fostered by the conflict between private needs and public values are well illustrated by the theatre, which is the most public form of arts. The post-war American theatre seemed more intensely psychological, exposing the disorientation and chaos that prevailed in the post-war periods but was marginalized compared to other forms of literature. However C.W. Bigsby voiced his discontent “Any account of American drama must begin by noting the casual disregard with which it has been treated by the critical establishment. There is no single history of its development, no truly comprehensive analysis of its achievement. In the standard histories of American
literature it is accorded at best a marginal position”(Bigsby 1992: 1). Similar apprehensive sentiments were articulated by Susan Harris Smith who poignantly characterized American drama as an “unwanted bastard stepchild”, the most “maligned” and “unjustly neglected” area of American literary studies (Smith in Kalaidjian 2005: 102).

Interestingly a parallel situation prevails in India too where scholars and theatre critics reiterate similar views. “Indian theatre of the post-independent period (beginning in 1947) remains largely outside the theoretical and critical constructs and continues to appear on the margins of contemporary world theatre, whether we approach plays as printed texts, performance events, entertainment media, or objects of scholarly study. The reasons for this obscurity lie in the linguistic plurality of Indian theatrical practice, the difficulties that attend any rigorous historicization of “Indian theatre” and the intensely problematic relation of such concepts as modernity, contemporaneity, and post-coloniality to drama, theatre, and performance in the present day India” (Dharwadker 2006: 2). Corresponding remarks have been made by Nandi Bhatia: “…within the expanding corpus of literary criticism on the literatures of India, it (drama) remains the genre that has received the least amount of critical attention” (Bhatia 2009: xiv).

At the backdrop of the discussion of negligence and marginality suffered by drama as a genre in India and America, it becomes crucial to illumine the works of two eminent dramatists whose reputation was jeopardized by their turbulent and controversial works - Tennessee Williams and Vijay Tendulkar who not only faced the storms of critical commentaries and antagonism but as experimental dramatists tried to restore modern drama to its central position and produced proliferous writings that customized a new idiom in the American theatre and Indian theatre respectively.

Modern playwrights have made significant contribution to literary culture. They have tried to record their own efforts and struggles to overcome the spiritual disintegration and chaos and embarked upon a journey of exploration into reality. This unmatched determination to present reality can be recognized in many Western dramatists such as Henrik Ibsen, Luigi Pirandello, Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and others as well as in many Indian dramatists such as Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh and others. These
dramatists have passionately dealt with various social issues reflecting on the social, cultural, ethos and the morals and manners of their respective societies.

Isolated studies of all these different playwrights are available in their respective languages and also in English and other world languages. The present study, however, is an attempt to examine the complex web of literary relations between Tennessee Williams (1911-1983), a major twentieth century American dramatist and Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008), a foremost contemporary Indian dramatist. It aims at investigating the dynamics of the process of literary interface that has shaped Vijay Tendulkar’s literary sensibility. The present analysis is thus an attempt to determine the position of Vijay Tendulkar in the context of his interaction with the Western dramatists in general and Tennessee Williams in particular. Rather than simply detecting the sources of his plays or satisfying a reader’s extra-territorial curiosity in authorial indebtedness, the study intends to understand the various designs and matrices, thrusts and drags of Tendulkar’s creative process itself.


That Tendulkar was acquainted with the American theatre quite well can be seen from his work of translation. He translated *Last Days of Lincoln* (1959) by Mark Van Doren as *Lincoln Yanchche Akherche Divas* (1964), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1959) by Tennessee Williams as *Vasnachakra* (1966) and *Hasty Heart* (1945) by John Patrick as *Lobh Nasava Hi Vinanti* (1972).
The fact that Tendulkar spent an entire year of his literary career for translating Williams’s play *Streetcar* as *Vasnachakra* deserves a special mention. About this significant literary act, Tendulkar writes, “The work of translating *Streetcar* showed me how difficult it is to produce a good translation as against the original work of art. I was not happy with the quality of translation for which I had to spend the entire year. We lose everything in faithful translation and the attempt to capture it leads to loss of words” (Patne 2009: 60; translated). Tendulkar’s translation of Williams’s play establishes the proximity between the two literary icons, one from the Indian tradition and the other from the American tradition.


Both Vijay Tendulkar and Tennessee Williams have been essentially preoccupied with the themes of sexuality, violence and family tensions. Such a literary analysis requires a systematic investigation into drama as a genre and its position in the present century before proceeding to the dramatists Tendulkar and Williams and their theatrical repertoire. A scrutiny of the position of the dramatic genre in the corpus of literature would serve to enrich our interpretation of both the playwrights, who played a pivotal role in popularizing the form of drama and breathed a new life into it.

Twentieth century is characterized by the end of European dominance in various parts of the world. Numerous colonies in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean witnessed liberation from political subjugation and acquired new nationhood and political autonomy. The political and aesthetic resuscitation led to reinvigoration of cultural forms and revival of latent traditions. The products of new nationalism, emerging forms of
aesthetic and literary enterprise sought recognition in Eurocentric hegemony and demanded a reorientation to adapt them into the global framework of literary canon.

Since the early 1950s Indian drama has embarked upon a journey to reaffirm its cultural identity and gain cognizance within the Euro-American theoretical and critical constructs. Heterogeneous cultural practices, plurality of languages, customs and conventions have lent a distinct permeability to contemporary Indian drama. Indian drama needs to be recognized and interpreted in the larger context of its Western counterparts which is possible by an effective application of comparative perspective. A historical review of modern theater in India testifies to the co-existence of significant systems of theatrical representation. As Aparna Dharwadker observes:

The two hundred year history of modern urban theater in India offers a remarkably extensive view of the interpretation of two major systems of theatrical representation – Indian and European classical- traditional and modern, antirealistic and realistic, provincial and metropolitan. As it was first institutionalized in the colonial metropolis, modern Indian theater appeared to epitomize the conditions of colonial dominance: it borrowed its organizational structures, textual features and performance conventions from Europe (especially England), superseded traditional and popular indigenous performance genres and found its core audience among the growing English educated Indian middle class…The influence of Western textual models produced a body of new “literary” drama and dramatic theory in several Indian languages, led to large-scale translations and adaptations of European as well as Indian canonical plays and generated the first nationalist arguments about the cultural importance of a national theater in India (Dharwadker 2006: 3).

Dharwadker proclaims that the forms and institutions of performance were borrowed but the context remained distinctly rooted in Indian myth, legend and culture (Ibid: 4). A comprehensive study of Indian theater is unquestionably embedded in its syncretistic modernity, internationalism and cosmopolitanism. The interaction of the East and the West, the projection of “alien” theatrical forms within the ideological constructs play a crucial role in the interpretation of the contemporary art forms of India. Such a study engaged with the shaping of ideologies, cross-cultural influences would involve a radically innovative perspective to comprehend the parallelisms or variations adopted.
The perspective would invariably encapsulate the need to traverse the arena of Comparative studies, wherein an analysis of two or more literatures would be undertaken. Comparative approach would facilitate an understanding of the complexities and subtleties of the extended encounter between India and the West and the syncretistic literary forms evolved. It is a deliberate attempt to register the growth of interest in the non-European literatures and to develop ways to accommodate this interest in the existent literary canon. As comparative approach is the most viable way of analyzing the literary interface between Williams and Tendulkar, before traversing the trajectory of Comparative Literature it becomes essential to gain an insight into the background and the present status of Comparative Literature.

Any literary enterprise that comprises Comparative Literature addresses the inevitable question: “What is Comparative Literature?” Susan Basnett defines:

The simplest answer is that Comparative Literature involves the study of texts across cultures, that it is interdisciplinary and that it is concerned with patterns of connection in literatures across time and space.

…Sometimes the journey begins with a desire to move beyond the boundaries of a single subject area that might appear to be too constraining, at other times a reader may be impelled to follow up what appear to be similarities between texts/authors from different cultural contexts. And some readers may simply be following the view propounded by Matthew Arnold in his Inaugural lecture at Oxford in 1857 when he said: “Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other literatures” (Basnett 1993: 1).

Matthew Arnold conceded that texts are part of a great intertextual tapestry and was apparently the first to use the term in English (1848) when he translated Ampere’s use of ‘histoire comparative’. The French have chosen the term “litterature comparee” (1829). The Germans refer to comparison as ‘vergleichende Lieraturgeschichte’.

What is now institutionalized as Comparative literature has, of course, a pedigree that can be variously traced back to Aristotle, perhaps, who considered all there was in the way of tragedy and derived a theory of a “perfected” or fulfilled genre. All along, such preceptors or theorists as Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Geoffroide de Vinsauf and Dante considered literature, in effect, to be what there was to hand, irrespective of
language or nationality and even more, the practitioners of literature for the most part silently, chose their array of inherited exemplars to “imitate” in an international process of making over into something else, as the German Wolfram refashioned the French Chrîtien/the English Chaucer refashioned the Italian Boccaccio. In this respect Dante with his survey of the known “national” literatures in De Vulgari eloquentia emerges as the broadest “comparatist” up to his time (Koelb, Noakes 1988: 39).

The movement across frontiers, mapping the deep structures, dissolving the barricades of nation-states, gives rise to the all encompassing approach of comparative literature. Goethe envisioned the great open space of Literature in his “Weltliteratur”. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren made a remarkable contribution to Comparative Literature in their Theory of Literature. They have focused on the term “Comparative Literature” in terms of its three different shades of meaning. They regard the study of Oral literatures, especially of folk-tales and myths as a fundamental component of culture and literary scholarship and place it alongside written literature. Comparative approach can enhance an understanding of the interaction between oral and written literature. Secondly, Comparative Literature is ‘the study of relationships between two or more literatures’ and thirdly it corresponds to the broader view of identifying with World Literature. The idealistic concept derives from Goethe’s “Weltliteratur” wherein Comparative Literature comprises the study of national literatures. Wellek and Warren mark their anxiety when they suggest that: “Comparative Literature will make high demands on the linguistic proficiencies of our scholars; it asks for a widening of perspectives, a suppression of local and provincial sentiments, not easy to achieve” (Wellek, Warren 1949: 44).

A decade later Wellek voiced his concern in his talk on ‘The Crises in Comparative Literature’. The exemplary model of universal values seemed to be a far-fetched dream. Lack of specificity, matter and methodology rendered the endeavor hazy and pedagogical. Comparative Literature is anxiogenic: a vague literary enterprise which defies precise answers to a question like ‘what is to be compared to what and how? Peter Brooks confessed: “Although I hold a Ph.D in Comparative Literature, I have never been sure I deserved it, since I’ve never been sure what the field, or the discipline, is and never sure that I could really claim to be teaching it or working in it” (Brooks in Bernheimer
Harry Levin complained in 1969, “we spend far too much of our energy talking …about Comparative Literature and not enough of comparing the literature” (Ibid 2). Indeed, he was asserting the importance of practical work over theory.

The term however has been surrounded with ambiguities and paradoxes from the moment of its inception. Comparative literature made its appearance at the backdrop of transition. In Europe new nation states evolved, issues of new national identity concomitant with national culture were raised. Paradoxically the discussion of universal literary achievements was juxtaposed with a strong sense of superiority which placed one culture above other. Evidently Comparative Literature proved to have little impact on the prevalent hegemony and was inadequate to establish equanimity amongst diverse cultures.

Susan Basnett cites the example of Philarete Chasles who opined that ‘France is the most sensitive of all countries…what Europe is to the world, France is to Europe’, in his 1835 speech to the Athenee, adding also that he had ‘contempt for narrow-minded and blind patriotism’ (Basnett 20). Chasles undeniably patronized the French superiority coupled with the unprejudiced nature of Comparative Literature. Another extremist position, perilous to the practice of Comparative Literature was witnessed in Lord Macaulay’s derogatory remarks:

I have never found one among them (Orientalists) who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. I have certainly never met with any Orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanskrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations (Macaulay in Curtin 1971: 178-191).

Macaulay’s view coincides with C. L Wrenn’s condescending outlook where he denounces the possibility of comparison between Sanskrit and other European languages and regards ‘European languages, medieval or modern’ as the only fit subjects for study of comparatists. Goethe’s concept of ‘World Literature’ and much later Matthew Arnold’s desire that ‘every critic should attempt to possess at least one great literature besides his own and the more dissimilar the better’, was enveloped in conservative and narrow-minded elitism. Goethe’s world was confined to Europe, however he stepped
beyond Germany but ironically Arnold’s Puritanism could not visualize the merits of a single literature farther than Europe, thus strengthening the bonds of Euro-centrism.

‘Comparative’ evidently was waged against ‘national’. In the context of the devastating effects of the World Wars Comparative Literature was an effective means to create peace and harmony across the political frontiers. It was indeed an impulse to expand the horizons of literary studies which were rooted in an aspiration to demonstrate the essential unity of European culture at the backdrop of violent upheaval and anarchy. The broadened perspective sought to reinforce an identification of new nations based on national languages and reach out to European civilization of high-cultural traditions. This idealism was associated with the belief that comparison could be a mutual endeavor.

A scrutiny of the development and spread of Comparative Literature in the powerful nations- France and Germany offers rich insights to the study of the subject. Interestingly the evolution of Comparative Literature has corresponded to the growth of nationalism. The French school of Comparative Literature, if we may say so, has always emphasized the ‘national characteristics’ placing France at the nuclear position in its cultural interaction with other nations. Ferdinand Bruntiere dwelt on the cultural transfer when he declared in 1900: “The history of Comparative Literature will sharpen in each one of us, French or English, or German, the understanding of the most national characteristics of our great writers. We establish ourselves only in opposing; and we do not know ourselves when we know only ourselves” (Bruntiere in Schultz and Rhein 1973: 161). It is significant to note that Bruntiere alluded to European nations alone and once again shifted the focus of studies to Euro-centrism. His successor Joseph Text, an author of another reference text oft-quoted in almost all studies of comparative literary history, namely *Etudes de Litterature Europeene* also fostered the notion of Comparative Literature embedded in Eurocentrism rather than universalism.

Comparative studies that developed concomitantly in Germany traversed on a distinct terrain. Max Koch, in his introduction to his new journal *Zeitschrift fur vergleichende Literaturgeschichte* portrayed translation as the core area of comparative research. Another point of departure was his stance that the Folklore although a separate discipline, the studies of folksong and poetry can be of immense value to Comparative Literature.
French Comparative Literature derives its study from the products of human mind whereas German comparatists are more involved with the issues pertaining to the ‘roots’ or ‘spirit’ of a nation. This incompatibility in taxonomies and in priorities is ingrained in the different cultural set-up and different political and economic systems of development operational in the nineteenth century. These distinctions aggravated in the twentieth century; as the French comparatists laid down restrictions on the usage of the term while German comparatists became increasingly chauvinistic. In such a situation a pioneering revelation was cited in the views of Hugo Meltz de Lomnitz (in his editorial statement to his journal in 1877) who argued that the discipline of Comparative Literature was not yet fully established. He framed out three principal tasks: a revaluation of literary history, a revaluation of translation as an art; and a belief in multilingualism. His vehement attack on the sense of superiority of Comparative Literature is premised on inadequate notions of nationalism:

It cannot be denied that the so called ‘World Literature’ is generally misunderstood. For today, every nation demands its own world literature’ without quite knowing what is meant by it. By now, every nation considers itself, for one good reason or another, superior to all other nations, and this hypothesis, worked out into a complete theory of suffisance, is even the basis of so much of modern pedagogy which today practically everywhere strives to be ‘national’ (De Lomititz in Basnett 26).

De Lomnitz’s views strike us today as both illuminating and influential. He rightly comprehended the worth of translation in the development of Comparative Literature. His perception of the significance of literary history and multiculturalism that involved all languages irrespective of their national status clearly set the tone for future studies in Comparative Literature. However the overwhelming enthusiasm of French comparatists sometimes led to implausible claims. Shortly Van Tieghem sought to specify exact dimensions for Comparative Literature but produced fresh complications. He drew a line of demarcation between ‘Comparative’ literature, ‘General’ literature and ‘World’ literature. He mentioned that Comparative Literature should contain the study of binary elements while General Literature should enclose the study of several literatures. This categorization mystified the concept rather than offering clarity.
Later Rene Wellek ruled out the possibility of Comparative Literature founded on ‘binary relations’ as it would deal with separate constituents rather than the work as a whole and would raise the problems of suitable methodology. Wellek devoted an entire chapter ‘General Comparative and National literature’ in his *Theory of Literature* and resumed his attack on the binary approach as being singularly responsible for the dwindling response to Comparative Literature. He observed: It is impossible to draw a line between comparative literature and general literature, between, say the influence of Walter Scott in France and the rise of the historical novel. Besides, the term ‘general literature’ lends itself to confusion; it has been understood to mean literary theory, poetics, the principles of literature” (Wellek 1949, 17).

Inevitably the French comparatists were influenced by the scholars like Van Tieghem, Ferdinand Baldensperger who attributed more prominence to binary studies vis à vis studies of literatures that belonged to two different languages. The earlier notions of various subjects being excluded from Comparative Literature were now replaced by precise and clear-cut directions of subject-matter within the design of Comparative Literature. It became more author-centered and folk literature, oral literature were completely disassembled from the realm of Comparative Literature. Comparatists were pre-occupied with important issues such as – What is the criteria that separates a dialect and a language? Is nationhood determined by the culture and literary tradition it owns or the geographical and political jurisdiction that defines its space and place in the world? French scholars squandered vast amounts of efforts to tackle these issues and expound other alternatives. This subsequently led to a shift in emphasis and set a rift between the scholars who accepted the principle of binaries and others who surpassed the linguistic barriers. It was as late as mid-1970’s that French comparative approach was dominated by linguistic basis which made it mandatory for every comparatist to gain knowledge of two languages and thereby dedicate his study to literatures of diverse languages. Ulrich Weisstein, recognized for his distinguished contribution to Comparative Literature, was also one of the scholars who advocated language oriented comparative studies. The trend that divorced language from different countries operating in the same languages unworthy of comparison was hazardous for the development of comparative studies, it employed a blinkered vision that restricted the scope of Comparative Literature
and demanded a degree of erudition. The comparatist would require an authority over two languages, inextricably related to two cultures before he endeavored to deal with comparison. Weisstein maintained that: “It would be … questionable to separate for the sake of a misguided methodological purism, Irish from English literature; for by such a sleight of hand, writers like Swift, Yeats and Shaw would be artistically uprooted for the sake of a nonliterary principle” (Weisstein 1973 13-14). However these shortcomings were incomprehensible even to scholars such as Weisstein.

Rene Wellek’s essay, “The Crisis of Comparative Literature” instigates alarming question about the scope and relevance of the French school. He vehemently criticized the obsolete methodology and biased nationalism. Wellek stridently attacked the French school:

All these flounderings are only possible because Van Tieghem, his precursors and followers conceive of literary study in terms of 19th century positivistic factualism, as a study of sources and influences…They have accumulated an enormous mass of parallels, similarities and sometimes identities, but they have rarely asked what these relationships are supposed to show except possibly the fact of one writer’s knowledge and reading of another writer (Wellek 1963: 282-296).

Wellek’s charges against Teighem are justifiable in view of the misconceived and dogmatic vision that cultivated irrelevant responses and made vain and futile efforts that led nowhere. The obvious consequences were manifested in the shifting focus from comparative studies to literary history and literary theory. Frank Warnke made an interesting observation in “The Compartists’ Canon”: “The study of roots is perhaps the base of our discipline, a discipline that should be concerned not merely with the delighted (and sometimes superficial) noting of similarities among texts but also with the unavoidable differences- of culture, of language itself- that ignore at the peril of sinking into the dreaded quagmire of dilettantism” (Warnke in Koelb and Noakes 1988 51).

Francois Jost aggressively rejected the very concept of National Literature:

Comparative Literature represents a philosophy of letters, a new humanism. Its fundamental principle consists of the belief in the wholeness of the literary phenomenon, in the negation of national
autarkies in cultural economic and as a consequence, in the necessity of a new axiology. “National Literature” cannot constitute an intelligible field of study because of its arbitrarily limited perspective: international contextualism in literary history and criticism has become a law. Comparative Literature represents more than an academic discipline. It is an overall view of literature, of the world of letters, a humanistic ecology, a literary Weltanschauung, a vision of the cultural universe, inclusive and comprehensive… Comparative Literature is the ineluctable result of general historical developments (Ibid 8-9).

Scholars and comparatists who enthusiastically turned to Comparative Literature as a radical subject with innovative urge despite lack of coherent methodology and precarious existence (few questions to Comparative Literature as a separate discipline are unresolved till the present) were soon diverted to upcoming and challenging areas of Literary Theory, Feminism, Semiotics, Anthropological Studies.

In the light of this discussion, it is essential to consider the development of Comparative Literature in United States of America. America readily recognized the intellectual concerns and embraced the new discipline. Charles Shackwell taught a course in ‘Comparative Literature at Cornell after 1871 and Charles Mills Gayley taught Comparative Literary Criticism at the University of Michigan from 1887. The first chair was established at Harvard in 1890 subsequently followed by another at Dartmouth in 1908. The “Comparative Literature Library” was inaugurated at Columbia which was later renamed “Studies in English and Comparative literature” after 1912. George Woodberry founded the first Journal of Comparative Literature at the same University; however it did not last long. It was the “scientific” approach that determined the acceptance of Comparative Literature. “Comparative Literature was gradually gaining ground as a fertile and pragmatic approach” (Boldor 2003: 45). It was Henry Remak who formulated the fundamental concept of American school as being distinct from French Comparative literature. Remak sought to redefine comparative literature from American perspective in his collection of essays published in 1961:

Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand, other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g. Painting, sculpture,
architecture, and music), and philosophy, history, the social sciences, religion etc. on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression” (Remak in Stallknecht and Horst 1961: 3).

Remak’s essay proved to be highly influential, it championed the practice of Comparative Literature all over America, and consequently provided the American model of Comparative Literature and established itself as the manifesto of the American school. Remak’s views powerfully exonerated his deliberate deviation from the French school that based itself on historical and generic details. He proposed a perspective that would thrive on descriptive and synchronic appreciation of the subject. His outlook remained markedly antithetical to the prevalent comparatists. He discerned the difficulty to distinguish between Comparative Literature and General Literature, its vagueness that defied any attempts at definition, which could encompass overlapping patterns of comparativeness. The French tradition that comprised Influence Studies was censured by Remak who found them shaped by the Positivistic approach and wanting in resourcefulness. He focused on the inadequacy of the French school that attributed much importance to factual evidence and presented an alternative model. In a good many influence studies, the location of sources has been given too much attention, rather than such a question as:

What was retained and what was rejected, and why, and how was the material absorbed and integrated and with what success? If conducted in this fashion, influence studies contribute not only to our knowledge of literary history but to our understanding of the creative process and of the literary work of art (Ibid 3).

The French comparatists endeavored to determine what might be included within or excluded from the range of Comparative Literature and its boundaries. On the contrary, Remak’s views proved to be a trend-setter and advocated a pattern that surpassed all the boundaries and transformed Comparative Literature into an all encompassing discipline. The American school transcended the confines of French school and displayed a new receptivity that opened up avenues for comparison between two or more subjects regardless of literature. Remak’s justification of Comparative Literature centered on the notion that it should be regarded as an ‘auxiliary discipline’, a bridge
between subject areas. He considers Comparative Literature as an exhaustive study in continuum- a ‘process’ as opposed to the French approach which considers it as a ‘product’. Significantly Remak evades the issue of “nationalism” and uses the neutral term ‘country’ bearing the geographical connotations and thus his definition contributed to depoliticization in a crucial manner. Eventually depoliticization became the hallmark of American school of Comparative Literature.

Mary Louis Pratt, in her interesting essay on ‘Comparative Literature and Global Citizenship’, focuses on three important historical processes that introduced transformation in the way literature and culture are conceived and studied in the American academy:

**Globalization** - The increased integration of the planet, the increasingly rapid flows of people, information, money, commodities, and cultural productions, and the changes of consciousness.

**Democratization** - Mainly, in this context, the opening up of higher education and the professoriate in the United States to groups traditionally excluded, especially women and people of color; the resultant diversification of both personnel and intellectual agendas; and the challenge to structures of exclusions formerly taken as natural.

**Decolonization** - In this context, two related processes- first, the entry of the third world into dialogue with the first and the latter’s recognition of itself as constituted, by relations of contact beyond its borders; second, the decolonization of the United States relationship to Europe in the domain of culture and its concomitant redefinition of itself (Pratt in Bernheimer 1955: 59).

In keeping with Pratt’s views, Charles Mill Gayley, one of the influential figures in Comparative Literature envisaged his task as quintessentially humanitarian. He devised his notion that study of literature should promote an understanding of the significance of other subjects vis-à-vis psychology, linguistics, anthropology, religion, art, social sciences, and hence develop an interdisciplinary or pluralistic approach. Fully conscious of the lacunae of European model and the difficulties of terminology and methodology in Comparative Literature, he provided a fresh and new impetus to Comparative Literature in his paper ‘What is Comparative Literature?’ He evolved a model of interdisciplinary work entirely detached from the patriotic chauvinism of
Europe and other emerging nations striving for political independence. This subsequently gave rise to the melting pot theory of Comparative Literature that obliterated the national and linguistic differences. The American School of Comparative Literature was founded on the ideas of interdisciplinarity and universalism right from its commencement. Gayley argues that ‘the study of a single literature may be just as scientifically comparative if it seeks the reason and law of the literature in the psychology of the race or of humanity’ (Gayley in Schulz and Rhein 1973: 102). His views contradicted the basic presumptions of French school that included the study of two or more literatures. Gayley ascribed the study of international relations and influences as one of the several areas of study.

Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, Gayley’s contemporary also aimed at a non-nationalistic model recommended by Gayley. Posnett’s work *Comparative Literature* published in 1886 was considered to be foundational to the field. However, antecedents can be traced in the ideas of Johann Wolfgang Goethe, whose vision of “World Literature” was broadly specified or quoted by Posnett. He advocated that the elementary principles of Comparative Literature were “social evolution, individual evolution and the influence of the environment on the social and individual life of man”. The term ‘comparative’, he suggested was synonymous with ‘historical’, but terminology notwithstanding, the method was the same, and consisted in ‘retracing the steps man has taken individually and collectively in reaching the highest social life” (Posnett in Schulz and Rhein 1973: 188).

Posnett’s evolutionary model and Gayley’s melting pot idealism were completely antithetical to the European versions of Comparative Literature. The American Comparatists rejected the French positivist approach and sought to encompass issues closely related to literary criticism. The American school instigated a process of de-emphasizing the tasks of scrutiny and investigation that demanded knowledge of the origins of texts and simultaneously involved in elaborate historical research. The transnational perspective reflected the post-war desire for international co-operation and harmony and indulged in the quest of universal human ‘truths’ that Posnett termed “the great moral need” of the times. Susan Basnett dwells on the difference between what she terms as Old World Comparative Literature and New world Comparative Literature. The Old World Comparative Literature is predominant in European nations that dwell on the
cultural and linguistic boundaries, creating an awareness of political identities. The New World comparatists on the other hand disregard the national literatures and focus on the universal literary archetypes. The distinction between the two literatures was not in the approach being historical or ahistorical but in the exemplary conviction of New World approach, in the greatness of human inventiveness and the outlook towards history—what history was? The vexed problem of ahistoricity was gradually mitigated under the development of American versions of formalist methods. The post-Second World War was characterized by a need to reconsider all the previous assumptions. Prior to the advent of the American school, the scope of Comparative Literature in the West was typically limited to the literatures of Western Europe and North America, predominantly literatures in English, German and French, with occasional forays into Italian literature (primarily for Dante) and Spanish literature (chiefly for Cervantes).

The text eventually became the nucleus for comparative study and the context was side-lined in the process. Rene Wellek offers an interesting admixture of the Old and New World approaches, nevertheless administering the central place to history but he strongly proposes the study of cultural history alone. Wellek recapitulates the issue of the text as the focus of study devoid of the context in his argument that:

"Comparative Literature is identical with the study of literature, independent of linguistic, ethnic and political boundaries. It cannot be confined to actual historical contacts. There may be …as much value in comparing phenomena such as languages or genres historically unrelated as in studying influences discoverable from evidence of reading or parallels…The main branches of literary study—history, theory and criticism—involve each other…Comparative Literature can and will flourish only if it shakes off artificial limitations and becomes simply the study of literature (Wellek in Trivedi and Mukherjee 1996: 4)."

This called forth an endeavor to assess texts across the cultures that implied an omission of historical outlook as well as evaded complementary issues of invasions, colonization economic, social deprivation that would have contributed significantly in the interpretation of the subject. Such a lop-sided viewpoint had its own limitations—it essentially alienated the artistic works from the outer reality and placed them in a void.

Yet critics like Aldo Scagloine go to the extent of arguing that “Comparative Literature can contribute to the study of cultural history what no other discipline can: the
identification of the ideological, social and economic circumstances that make possible the creation of a given work” (Scagloine in Koelb and Noakes 14). Scagloine goes still further and attributes greater importance to the role of cultural history in the understanding of literature.

The emergence of the term ‘post-colonial’ in the realm of criticism has been an important development in Comparative Literature in the 20th century. It invariably marks a shift in the ethnographic and geographical entities and expands the horizon of Comparative Literature to investigate Post-colonial cultures and the affiliated literary output. As Ashcroft et al. consider it:

The post-colonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing into an acceptance of difference on equal terms. Both literary theorists and cultural historians are beginning to recognize cross-culturality as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation… the strength of postcolonial theory may well lie in its inherently comparative methodology and the hybridized and syncretic view of the modern world which this implies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989: 36).

The Comparison of form and content across postcolonial literatures provides fresh insights in the aesthetic richness and its immense possibilities. The nations under subjugation witnessed the evils of imperial dominance and political and religious intolerance led to a new awakening. The resistance to conventional European diachronic model of periodization of literature that neglected non-European entities inspired a new way of thinking. Comparatists from India, China, African nations have collectively asserted their identities against the European model of cultural periodization and are positively engaged in replacing it with substitutes from their respective cultures. “The discourse of post-colonialism is ostensibly not about the West where it has originated but about the colonized other. For the first time probably in the whole history of the Western academy, the Non-West is placed at the centre of its dominant discourse. Even if it is in part a sort of compensation for all the colonial material exploitation, the academic attention now being paid to the post-colonial is so assiduous as to soothe and flatter” (Trivedi in Trivedi and Mukherjee 1996: 231). The indomitable campaign illustrates the ways in which the ancient ideas of universality of literature and literary history are being
contested. Postcolonial Comparative Studies do not operate on the hinges of binary opposition alone but are framed on the recognition awarded to the plurality of encounters between colonizing and colonized juxtaposed with the challenges against the hegemony of the European cultures. The Post-colonial theory has been further accentuated by the flourishing literatures generated in bilingual or multilingual societies since the mid-20th century. The Eurocentric concepts of comparative literature study have always followed pre-defined paths, pre-determined periods and literary conventions and a safeguard against any deviations. However the main problems for scholars in non-European set-up arise from the initial stages. They have to devise means of articulating their perceptions of their own cultural products and evaluate them with the other cultures which also have been their rulers. Susan Basnett comments that “the comparative labyrinth opened by post-colonial theories of literary production is much more in keeping with the pluralism of the postmodernist world of the 1990s” (Basnett 1993: 86). She uses a fascinating metaphor to highlight the difference between the co-existing literary systems in the modern period. The odyssey through these diverse literary cultures is analogous to a labyrinth that directs us through various doors, mirrors and offers an infinite wealth of altered perceptions and innovative connections.

At this stage, it is essential to retrospectively examine the conditions that favored comparative approach and its manifestations in the Indian context. Contemporary Indian culture is highly complex and fascinating as a consequence of the unique and distinctive amalgam of tradition and modernity as well as the multiplicity of subcultures and languages. How “pure” a literature can remain and how to keep a literature free from the contact with other literatures- these questions were raised in India in mid-nineteenth century by the makers of modern Indian literature which drew heavily from European literature. “In 1858 Michael Madhusudhan Dutta wrote to one of his friends, “Do you dislike Moor’s poetry because it is full of orientalism?” And in 1874 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee defended ‘imitation’ in literature citing instances from social and literary history. His spirited defense of imitation was not merely a justification of the actions of the contemporary Bengali writers, but also of the creative spirit that refuses anything as alien in the process of expression. In the same way Michael Madhusudhan Dutta’s questions actually pleaded for a new methodology as opposed to the model sustained by
the exclusiveness of national literatures (Das in Chandra Mohan 1989: 8). The literary works in the indigenous languages embody the rich variety and diversity of the culture. An approach that would encompass the treasures of regional literatures and relate it to the larger corpus of literatures comes as a useful tool that equips the critics and comparatists to delve deeper into the submerged layers of their own cultures. The trend towards depoliticization of literature is questioned and the formalist model is entirely uprooted in the Indian scenario. The evolution of Indian literary history follows a cyclical pattern, recurrence of certain patterns and embodies a kind of dualism manifested in an action-reaction pattern. Rene Wellek rightly observes:

The cyclical conception easily led to the idea that literary evolution represents the struggle of two elements, a sequence of actions and reactions, a seesaw between creative and reflective, original and imitative, natural and artificial or romantic and classical ages (Wellek and Warren 1949: 148).

Interestingly Comparative Literature evolved in the non-European countries like China, Japan, India and other Asian nations on exactly the same premise of “National Literature” that the West strived to repudiate. “Such a development may be initiated from within the native springs of vitality without any foreign intervention testifying to the operation of a self-propelled internal dynamism set in motion by historical necessity or it could be due to a jolt from without or due to a combination of both” (Das 2000: 9). This complete reversal in outlook has gained poignancy in a country like India, where Comparative Literature enables the multilingual and heterogeneous, indigenous literatures to be unified and uphold the national cultural identity. Swapan Majumdar precisely notes: “it is because of this predilection for national literature- much deplored by the Anglo-American critics as methodology- that comparative literature has struck roots in the third world nations and in India particular” (Majumdar 1987: 53). Majumdar’s conviction truly mirrors the legitimacy of comparative studies in pluralinguistic country like India. “Comparison is right reason for us because one, we are multilingual, and two, we are third World” (Dev in Koshy 1987: 19). The legitimization and relevance of comparative studies in India despite its decline in the West is based on certain premises that deserve consideration.
First, the rise of Comparative Literature is intimately related to nationalism. In the West it began as a reaction to nationalism when it reaped the fruits of nationalistic fervour in the form of colonialism. The progenitors of the idea of Comparative Literature like Goethe and Arnold had sensed the underlying threats of narrow-minded parochialism as nation may at times become an alienating category. Such categorization carried the hazards of insulation and distinguished literatures on the basis of regional, linguistic, and cultural confines.

In India the advent of Comparative Literature runs parallel to the growth of nationalism. Most of the Universities established in the post-independence period moved away from the traditional forms of learning. English education gained prominence, (although it may be argued that English education too in its own way contributed to alienate others from the native speakers). Subsequently the new literate elite created by Western education developed a distinct cultural pattern via the structural, sometimes even syntactic imitation of English. “Although Indian writers adopt and appropriate Western technologies, their use of the English language indicates an inescapable co-option to the Western impact” (Sharma 2003:13). The charisma of western language and literature was ingrained by the English education. The growth of printing, and the possibilities of standardization it contained, helped this norm language to be consciously adopted by the elites of the sub-regions. The predominant trend in the newly formed elite-groups underscored creativity in the indigenous languages and primarily focused on texts and their interpreters abroad on foreign terms. As the global and the local interacted in various ways, it was subjected to the risks of being economically, intellectually, politically and culturally submerged under the overwhelming strength of the global. Edward Said notes “a standard imperialist misrepresentation has it that exclusively Western ideas of freedom led the fight against colonial rule…mischievously overlook(ing) the reserves in Indian and Arab culture that always resisted imperialism” (Said in Sharma 2003: 12-13). Under the circumstantial pressures and the dire need to thwart underlying fears the local began to assert its identity in linguistic, literary and cultural terms. The same period characteristically witnessed the rise of modern Indian literatures namely Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu among many others, various nationalities within pan-Indian nationality.
Comparative Literature provided a new dimension to national and sub-national literatures in India which had been outside the international frame. It reinvigorated claims to assert ‘cultural identity’ and awarded them space and position on a horizontal rather than vertical plane.

Second, for decades, Comparative Literature was rooted in Western literatures and significantly the Indian scholarship sought to separate it from its initial engagements and place itself at a position to scrutinize Comparative Literature from their perspective. Swapan Mazumdar offers a radically alternative outlook and initiates a reassessment of the nomenclature of “national literatures”. He boldly shakes the customary notions of the West that pride on being majority and set themselves against minority. He still further contemplates that Western literatures comprise of ‘sub-national literatures’- French, English, and German as they belong to the Graeco-Roman origin. The post-colonial literatures are highly skeptical of the narrow perspectives, the presumptuousness of European and North American nations which had hitherto confined the literature within their thresholds. The rapid growth in comparative literature in the third world of relocation is captured by Homi Bhabha in his discussion of post-colonialism: “Instead of cross-referencing there is an effective, productive cross-cutting across sites of social significance, that ceases the dialectical, disciplinary sense of ‘cultural’ reference and relevance” (Bhabha in Basnett 1993: 6). Comparative literature in the third world and the Far East has nevertheless changed the agenda for the subject and shifted the axis of the studies.

Third, the increasing consciousness among Indian scholars and institutions from academia that they have always been at the receiving end of the theories from the West has directed a new way of thinking and provided radical perspective. As Gilbert and Tompkins observe “Colonization is insidious: it invades far more than political chambers and extends well beyond independence celebrations” (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996: 230). It is the growth of the awareness that the center-periphery configuration needs to be subverted. The West, the privileged colonizer has dictated and manipulated the critical discourses and India has shared its role as the ‘Other’, along with other post-colonial societies. The Western theories and concepts have experimented with the post-colonial societies and literatures to re-establish its central position. A realization that revival of
traditions and reinforcement of self-generated critical theories can assure a paradigmatic shift among these societies is of paramount importance. The newly acquired self-reliance and political autonomy endowed the Indian scholars or academicians with a revisionary enterprise that questioned the existent forms and theories of critical understanding. A new recognition acquiesced that categories such as postmodernism or post-colonialism required to be re-examined and re-assessed in the newly acquired cultural space.

In the words of Homi Bhabha, “a range of contemporary critical theories suggest that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history- subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement-that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. There is even a growing conviction that the affective experience of social marginality…transforms our critical strategies” (Bhabha 1994: 172). Comparative Literature in India became an endeavor to carve a niche for itself in a realm of study that had hitherto patronized Eurocentrism and marginalized ‘other’ literatures.

Fourth, Comparative Literature promoted a dialogue within the rich corpus of various national literatures; induced homogeneity in the midst of diversity. India, a land rich in linguistic and cultural multiplicity encompasses little nationalities that demand cognizance and recognition. Suppression of their identities can pose a threat and assume menacing proportions. Comparative Literature Studies accentuate the process of interaction among these indigenous literatures that have been neglected. However it is the need of time to revaluate the existent parameters and devise our own model that would impart significance to experiences, realities and literatures within the Indian scenario.

Avadhesh Kumar Singh exactly highlights the interaction between ‘Home’ and ‘Abroad’ and categorically states that it should ideally be preceded by the dialogue between ‘Home’ and ‘Home’. The new dimensions and the purposeful relevance of Comparative Literature can be attributed to the consciousness that dialogue between ‘Home’ and ‘Abroad’ should not flourish at the cost of the dialogue between ‘Home’ and ‘Home’. Singh cites the study to be wide-ranging and remarks: “The introduction of comparative literatures in accepting the existence of the other (literatures and languages) in India, in resisting the possibilities of the hegemony by dominant groups and also in broadening the perspectives for prospective assessment and interpretation of our own literatures’, if one of the true measures of assessing a literary work may be another work
of that sort” (Singh in Das 2000: 151). Thus, comparative literature has contributed in foregrounding intra-national interaction.

Fifth, Comparative Literary Studies in India not only aim at intercepting cultural peripheries but in devising an Indian model, suited to comprehend the multifariousness and plurality of Indian literatures. The fact that ‘Indian literature’, unlike ‘English literature’ or ‘American literature’ cannot be judged monolithically needs to be addressed. This contends that theories and critical categories applied to the other monolithic literatures cannot be extended to Indian sub-national literatures as it would be too reductive, overlooking the complexities.

Evaluating East-West literary relations, Swapan Majumdar argues that Indian literature, like its African and Latin American counterparts, forms a community of what he calls ‘sub-national literatures’ no less robust than the components of Western literature: except for the fact that in the former only literary semblances count for their commonness, while in the latter a common ethos, equally manifest in all, hold them together (Majumdar 1987: 54).

As a result he suggests that comparison should take place not across individual cultural boundaries, but on a larger scale altogether: “Indian literature…should be compared not with any single literature of the West, but with the concept of Western literature as a whole, while the regional literatures should be assigned the status of constituent sub-national literatures in India” (Ibid: 54).

Majumdar projects a revolutionary approach that is incompatible with the Eurocentrism of the Western comparatists. Firstly he declines the claims of Western scholars who consider Indian and African literatures monolithically and disregard the kaleidoscopic varieties of what he terms ‘constituent sub-literatures’ of the respective nations. His observations foreground the concerns of Indian and African scholars who precipitate a re-assessment of the old prototypes that privileged component literatures of Western origin and designate international superiority to such literatures.

Comparative Literature Studies specifically embark upon a journey of exploration into the sublimities and complexities of “Indian literatures”. The reaction of the Indian and African comparatists who deliberately generalize and club together “Western
literature” or “European literature” testifies to the fact that “monolithic categorization” would be unacceptable.

Sisir Kumar Das has rightly interpreted that “in order to make it a significant category, Indian literature must be taken as complex literary relations and any study of Indian literature must reflect that. It is not an enquiry into their unity alone, but also a study in their diversity which enables one to understand the nature of literary facts” (Das in Das and Dev 1989: 95). Hence Comparative Studies broaden the horizon of literatures all over the world and open new vistas of knowledge.

Sixth, Comparative Literature in the Indian context derives from a phenomenal need that the critical methods and tools employed in the West are ill-suited to heterogeneous literatures of India. There is a requirement to address the issue of periodization. The history of literary tradition and textual production in a country like India marks a considerable difference from the conceptualization in the West. Nirmala Jain’s observation about the difference between studying literature comparatively in India and the West is highly effective:

The business of conducting a comparative study of various literatures in the West and various national literatures in India is not quite the same. The fact that Indian literatures are a product of a multiracial and multicultural, social-historical mélange cannot be overlooked. Both those who have their roots in a common linguistic stock, and those who have stemmed from different linguistic stocks, share and are bound together by common socio-cultural and historical bonds. The pertinent question is whether in order to get a real insight into this situation, on an intranational plane before moving on to an international plane. In other words, can any Indian national literature be understood as a singular entity in isolation, comparable to single non-Indian literatures? In this context, the fact that the impacts and influences on the Indian psyche have been more or less similar in various regions cannot be overlooked. There might have been some differences of degree and variation in chronology. In some cases it would be impossible to capture the spirit of a particular movement or a particular trend in its entirety, without any reference to more than one literature. The case of bhakti in the medieval period and that of the renaissance in the modern age can be cited as examples. (Jain in Dev and Das 1988: 81).
The continuity of the Indian tradition enriched with indigenous literatures is insurmountable and could be exposed to the risks of over-simplification and reduction if the Western models of literary chronology are applied to the Indian writers. Imposing the European outlook on a non-European system endangers the cultural identity and is therefore unrecommendable. Sir Aurobindo unequivocally protests against the devaluation of Indian literature by the Western critics. The application of European model would be supercilious, on the contrary the fundamental concern of Indian literature is the creation of a literary history rooted in Indian traditions and structured from Indian models.

The Indian Comparative Literature Association founded in 1981 precisely mentions its main objective: “…to arrive at a concept of Indian literature which will not only modernize our literature departments but also take care of the task of discovering the greatness of our literature and to present a panoramic view of Indian literary activities through the ages” (Basnett 1993: 38-39).

Restoring continuity of tradition, organizing a canon that comprises literatures originating from Indian languages and asserting cultural uniqueness are issues that have primarily sought to redefine Comparative Literature in the Indian scenario.

Seventh, the initiation of Comparative Literature Studies helped the indigenous Indian literatures in receiving other literatures and further accepting their co-existence, correspondingly overcoming narrow-minded loyalties. It ensured a safe and cordial exchange ‘within’ the cultural spheres before venturing to look ‘without’ in the global context. K.R.S Iyengar suggests that “it should be instructive to study a regional literature in the wider context of Indian literature with its great arching movements from Vedic age to the present day” (Iyengar 1984: 15). The essence of Comparative Literature is the study of interrelationship between two or more literatures which is of paramount importance in Indian situation.

Comparative Literature eliminates the possibilities of hegemony and shakes the complacency of the writers, exposing them to larger contexts beyond the claustrophobic confines of national literatures. As Bijay Kumar Das notes, “It transcends the narrowness, provinciality and parochialism of national and general literatures” (Das 2000: 4). It chiefly maintains that any literature is not created in a vacuum but arises out of a social
context. The study of such literature and its worth can be best understood with reference to other literatures within and beyond one’s country.

Comparative Literature prevents literary pursuits and evaluation from degenerating into personal prejudices and predilections and grants the promotion of intimacy between alien literatures, thereby contributing to harmony and integration. Various endeavors in Comparative Literature can add to maturity and insightful interactions. It enables specific indigenous literatures to carve a niche for themselves in the larger corpus of international frame.

Eighth, although Comparative Literature as a subject appears to be declining in the West, it is expanding and flourishing elsewhere in Non-European countries like India. Beyond the Euro- American tradition, which now provides a greater emphasis on literary theory, is a dynamic post-European model of Comparative Literature that has shifted the league of the studies to redefine and reconsider a trajectory of core areas such as cultural identity, literary canons, periodization and evolved new parameters to suit its needs.

Comparative Literature is nourished in its altered state in comparative, cultural, post-colonial and the hitherto neglected area of study called translation. Though the word ‘translation’ may have forsaken its traditional connotations, the Indian consciousness is primarily a translational consciousness. The myriad interpretations and nuances emerging from the unpremeditated processes of translation have become intrinsic to Indian consciousness. The issues of national culture and identity are the hinges on which Comparative Literature operates. As the claims of cultural identity are of perennial importance in post-colonial Indian context, Comparative Literature gains pre-dominance and involves a radical way of reinforcing the key-points of culture and identity. Bill Ashcroft and Tiffins elucidate that post-colonial theory is related to reconstruct and reassessment, which essentially presupposes a translation process.

Post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybridized phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the ‘grafted’ European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity. Such construction or reconstruction only occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic systems and ‘peripheral’ subversions of them. It is not possible to return to or to rediscover an absolute pre-colonial cultural purity, nor is it possible to create national or

A paradigmatic shift that relegates central position to translation within the auspices of Comparative Literature has been highlighted by Susan Basnett and Lefevere in their introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Translation, History and Culture* (1990) – “Translation has been a major shaping force in the development of world culture and no study of Comparative Literature can take place without regard to translation” (Basnett, Lefevere 1990: 12). Further, to focus on translation as an embodiment of power and authority, Andre Lefevere’s comment is of vital importance: Translation is not just ‘a window opened on another world’ or one such pious platitude. Rather, translation is a channel opened, often not without a certain reluctance, through which foreign influences can penetrate the native culture, challenge it and even contribute to subverting it” (Lefevere 1992: 2). In India translation studies provided access to wealth of possibilities not only at the pan-Indian level across regional or indigenous literatures but intercepted the national boundaries by adopting, appropriating, assimilating or influencing literary exchange or interpenetration.

Evan-Johar in his scholarly undertaking argues that certain conditions determine high translation activity in a culture. He hypothesizes three major conditions: when a literature is in an early stage of development; when a literature perceives itself to be peripheral or ‘weak’ or both; when there are turning points or crises, literary vacuums (Johar in Basnett 142). If Johar’s radical ideas are extended to the Indian consciousness (primarily any non-European nation) translation studies can gain acceleration with the requirement to resolve the dichotomies of marginal-central status in the prevalent hegemonies of literatures. Comparative Literature survives in the Indian or African contexts despite its demise in the West predominantly through the indispensability to assert their cultural entities and demand a horizontal rather than vertical hegemonic space. Comparative Literature in the garb of translation is a key factor in initiating cultural exchange as a transgressive activity with the manipulative process of intercultural transfer and its ideological implications.
In their introduction to *Translation, History and Culture* Basnett and Lefevere argue that the time has come to rethink about the marginalization of translation within Comparative Literature:

> With the development of translation studies as a discipline in its own right, with a methodology that draws on comparatistics and cultural history, the time has come to think again. Translation has been major shaping force in the development of world culture, and no study of comparative literature can take place without regard to translation (Basnett and Lefevere 1990: 12).

Post-colonial discourses foreground the critique of orientalism and relate themselves with the cultural margins, hence are indispensable. At this juncture characterized by a period of translation, interspersed with changes in cultural and literary theory and practices, post-colonial studies could offer a remedial step to theatrical inter-culturalism that is incognizant of Indian playwrights. Notably, however post-colonial studies switch their concerns from the subject of drama in significant ways. Post-colonial criticism is inclined towards the textual and the discursive; in contrast drama is a more performance oriented genre. Literary works from the diaspora are pre-dominant in post-colonial literatures that appraise the conditions of migrancy, while dramatic performance is deeply rooted in the conventional forms of the respective regions and is bound to be more localized. Post-colonial criticism is more accommodative to Westernized modernity and Europhone writings; on the other hand, drama derives its forms and structural patterns from indigenous languages and pre-colonial traditions and practices. As Dharwadker mentions: “When post-colonial critics do deal with drama and theatre, they tend to employ analytic categories that misrepresent, marginalize, or exclude Indian theatre altogether” (Dharwadker 9). Evidently post-colonial analysis seems to be deficient to cover the multi-lingual, multi-racial, post-colonial writings, pursuits of translation and adaptation and even the metamorphosis of relations between colonial and indigenous Indian languages.

The relevance and significance of comparative studies in the Indian scenario, with especial emphasis on drama brings us to the analysis of the marginalization and negligence ascribed to drama in general and the need to explore the contribution that can be made by conducting a comparative analysis of drama. The present study seeks to
examine the ‘literary interface’ of Vijay Tendulkar and Tennessee Williams. *Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1994) defines the term ‘interface’ as: 1. A surface regarded as the common boundary of two bodies or spaces. 2. The facts, problems, considerations, theories, practices, etc., shared by two or more disciplines, procedures, or fields of study: *the interface of Chemistry and Physics*. 3. A common boundary or interconnection between systems, equipment, concepts, or human beings” (Yerkef 1994: 741). By extension, the term ‘literary interface’ suggests the common spaces shared by two or more literary traditions, two or more literary icons, etc. A study in literary interface, therefore, explores the ‘facts, problems, considerations, theories, practices, etc.’ shared by two or more literary traditions, two or more literary icons. The present study is, therefore, a modest attempt to explore the literary interface of Marathi theatre and American theatre in general and Vijay Tendulkar and Tennessee Williams in particular.

The failure of international scholarship to deal with the modern corpus of Indian writing, its relation with the colonial past or its location in the contemporary canon of world literature showcases the misplaced critical focus rather than deliberate incognizance or neglect. A vast spectrum of studies on ‘Indian theatre’ from Indian, European and Anglo-American critics is available, however these studies involve fragmentary, ahistorical or neo-orientalist approaches that thwart any attempt at systematic and historical analysis and thereby dwindle Indian drama into insignificance. The multi-lingualism of Indian literatures, the origin from Sanskrit period that marks the continuity of Indian drama and performance and the effects of decolonization have coalesced in several ways to obliterate the repercussions of political autonomy on the fabric of Indian society and culture. Most ‘histories’ of theater confine themselves to the origin and development of drama in a single language and the subtleties of post-colonial dichotomies and the intra-lingual similarities that indicate the antiquity and the rich spectrum of post-independence theatre go unheeded. *Perspectives on Indian Drama in English* edited by M.K Naik and Shankar Mokashi-Punekar (1977) and Anand Patil’s *Western influence on Marathi Drama* (1993) are studies that restrict their scope to linguistic orientations. Most exhaustive and elaborate studies of “Indian drama”, emphasize the continuity of tradition remarkable for its anachronism and affluent
diversity but inexorably offer an insufficient and asystematic account of the same. Som Benegal’s *A Panorama of Theatre in India* (1967), Adya Rangacharya’s *The Indian Theatre* (1971) and Nemichandra Jain’s *Indian Theatre: Tradition, Continuity and Change* (1992) belong to this category. In a significant ideological variation, Indian scholars construct “modern Indian drama” as a cumulative practice of theatre in fourteen or more languages and lack specific clarity between the colonial or post-colonial periods unless required for chronological details. Various publications such as Ministry of Information volume on *Indian Drama* (1956); the Pen volume on *Drama in Modern India* (1961) and *Indian Drama* (1974), a collection of essays edited by H.H. Anniah Gowda can be conceived under the aforesaid approach. Works such as Rustom Bharucha’s *Rehearsals of Revolution: The Political Theatre of Bengal* (1983), and Jacob Srampickal’s *Voice to the Voiceless: The Power of people’s Theatre in India* (1995) provide trailblazing details of revolutionary and protest theatre, but delineate particular forms only. The second volume of *Rasa: The Indian Performing Arts in the Last twenty-five years* (1995) provides methodical, chronological details, the regional languages offer bases for analyses but the exchange at transregional level remains unfocused. Not a single work of interpretive criticism explores theory, polemics and practice in post-colonial Indian drama completely. Such an enterprise would offer insights into this genre’s linguistic, regional and ideological multiplicity.

Western critical discourses on Indian drama have further aggravated the peripheral position attributed to the genre by Indian scholarship. *The Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance* (1990) by Farley Richmond, Darius Swann and Phillip Zarrilli is a noteworthy contribution to understanding the myriad forms of performance genres prevalent in India- folk, ritual, devotional popular forms that demonstrate the ‘linguistic, cultural and religious diversity’. Ralph Yarrow’s *Indian Theatre* (2001) is the first western attempt to forefront modern and contemporary Indian theatre and renders a coherent analysis of critical taxonomies as text, performance and theory. The study is chiefly occupied with the Western interaction with Indian theatre in the post-war period. Major Euro-American criticism and commentary is still engaged with relating texts and performances in India to the social or spiritual ethos of specific communities, consequently the urban theatre is obscured, as it cannot be assimilated to other social and
religious forms; it exists as a modern form and a cultural institution in its own right based on printed text scripted as drama.

The marginalization of Indian theatre is also evident at the macrocosmic global level. In *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996), a book of international acclaim Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins evade Indian theatre as its “history or practice is too complex” to be considered in a broadly comparative analysis and “the varieties of drama, dance, languages and cultures that have influenced Indian theatre are too vast to consider in a text other than one devoted to just India” (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996: 7).

Bruce King’s *Post-Colonial English Drama* (1992) is a linguistically oriented anthology of essays that ranks exclusively white anglophone settler colonies like Australia, New Zealand, Canada along with non-Western postcolonial cultures that comprise of well-established, time-honored traditions of writing and performance in indigenous languages. However, the essays do not address crucial issues of the distinction between monolingual and multilingual traditions or the postcolonial politics of language completely unaddressed. King’s attenuated denotation of “English drama” eliminates notable Indian dramatic texts, directorial ingenuity, dynamism and theatrical modernism of the early forty years, clearly manifested in his introductory remark: “Indian drama in English has been much slower to develop than theatre in Hindi and the regional languages” (King 1992: 8).

*Introduction to Postcolonial Theatre* (1996) by Brian Crow and Chris Banfield is quite enterprising in awarding space to noted Indian playwrights such as Girish Karnad and Badal Sircar, who write in Kannada and Bengali respectively in linearity with such dramatists as Athol Fugard and August Wilson alongside anglophone postcolonial theatricians as Wole Soyinka, Jack Davis and Derek Walcott. Despite the acknowledgement of contribution from the non-European literature, the writer’s account of postcolonialism suffers from the same inadequacy as articulated by Gilbert and Tompkins. “Cultural subjection or subordination…” is considered to be central to the art of all the dramatists (Crow and Banfield 1996: xii). Crow and Banfield fail to award space to an indigenous writer like Vijay Tendulkar. Such a view grossly distorts the artistic
output of Karnad and Sircar, the western educated dramatists molded by the modernist and post-modern traditions of existentialist, absurdist and historical-mythic theatre.

Two later collections edited by Gilbert, *Post Colonial Stages: Creative and Critical Views on Drama, Theatre and Performance* (1999) and *Post-Colonial Plays: An Anthology* (2001) offer more subtle views on the development of theatre by encompassing material on or from India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore along with Australia, Canada, Africa, and the Caribbean. The collaborative venture is a pioneering work of criticism that establishes the complementary association of postcolonialism to theatre. Yet none of these works mentioned provide a comprehensive analyses of Indian theatre in the post-colonial context. Aparna Dharwadker rightly professes: “While postcolonial studies is in a unique position to extend canons, invent new critical methodologies, and inscribe new literary histories, its privileging of Europhone and diasporic textual production subjects a field like postcolonial Indian theatre to a triple marginalization-by genre, by ideology, and by language” (Dharwadker 2006: 11).

Dharwadker’s own work, *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance in India since 1947* (2006) is probably the most erudite enterprise that deals with unresolved issues of positioning Indian theatre using the existing Indian, Western and post-colonial frames. Her analyses transcend linguistic and regional barriers and offer appreciation of eminent Indian dramatists exercising their talent in different languages but contributing to a single corpus of Indian Literature. The wide-ranging and elegantly nuanced research ushers in a new era in the study of the drama and offers an array of theoretical insights. Her extensive exploration is supplemented by useful and informative appendixes. It is one of the painstakingly researched and brilliantly theorized book that every theatre-goer and reader must closely read.

Another book that deserves consideration is *Modern Indian Theatre: A Reader* (2009) edited by Nandi Bhatia. Theatre is scrutinized as an important forum for progressive writers and political activists in the early twentieth century in post-independence India. The essays present a wide spectrum of perspectives that enlighten the multi-faceted, hybrid and contested formations of modern Indian theatre. The writings tackle questions related to theatre’s negotiation with issues of class, caste, and gender, the way in which ‘nation’ came to be imagined at critical historical moments; the response of
drama to the emergence and domination of mass media, the proliferation and influence of Western media in India; and the role of actors and the countless meanings of scenery, performance, spaces, architecture and language. This book is certainly a remarkable gift to the elucidation of theatre’s ambivalent and paradoxical relationship to ‘modernity’. Although it includes couple of articles on Hindi and Punjabi drama, it devotes single articles to Bengali and Marathi theatre.

No writer other than Dharwadker has been able to deliver a fair treatment to Marathi drama that very often goes unheeded notwithstanding its immense contribution at the pan Indian and even international level. Hence the present study is a moderate attempt to examine Vijay Tendulkar’s artistic accomplishment alongside the study of American theatre in general and Tennessee Williams’s dramatic achievements in particular.

A glance at the studies on drama in general has already elucidated the marginalization of Indian drama in the corpus of World Literature. Marathi theatre suffers from neglect at home and abroad equally. The present study aims at enhancing the prospects of Marathi literature with singular reference to Vijay Tendulkar, the avant garde Marathi writer. Comparative Literature comes as a much desirable tool to establish the affinities and originality of Vijay Tendulkar and Tennessee Williams who exercised their theatrical dexterity as literary contemporaries in different parts of the world across the globe. A probe into the extant critical analyses available on Tendulkar would assuredly enlighten his position in the literary world.

A number of studies with reference to Vijay Tendulkar’s contribution to Marathi literature are available, although very few in English. One of the most commendable attempts is Dr. Chandrashekhar Barve’s Tendulkaranchi Natake (Tendulkar’s Plays) (1985), a book in Marathi, replete with contemporary critical commentaries and exhaustive analysis of his escalating artistic genius. His work illuminates the tradition of Marathi drama, determining Tendulkar’s unique position as an experimental litterateur. He skillfully defends Tendulkar on the charges of plagiarism and offers fresh insights into his works. However the comprehensive study of all the plays written till then disallows the author to investigate the plays with greater depth.
The eminent literary critic V. B. Deshpande in his book *Marathi Natak: Swatantryottar Kal* (Marathi Drama: Post Independence period 1947-90) exhibits the nature of Tendulkar’s artistic talent that surpassed the conventional Marathi drama by thematic, stylistic, dramatic innovations, the subtle characterization and bold presentations. Deshpande refers to the impact of Sartre and Camus on Marathi writers such as Vasant Kanetkar, Tendulkar and others but does not present detailed analysis.

In *Ajche Natakkar* (Today’s Dramatists, 1995), Dr Manisha Dixit examines the contemporaneity of Tendulkar evident in his transcending the conventional and employing innovative dramatic techniques. Dr Maya Sardesai, in *Bharatiya Rangbahumichi Parampara* (Tradition of Indian Theatre, 1996) records the transition of Marathi preoccupation with Western drama from Shakespeare to Henrik Ibsen. Madhukar Lohi in his work, *Marathi Natak Ani Rangbhoomi: Ek Abhyas* (Marathi Drama and Theatre: A Study, 2006) makes elaborate study of the origin and development of Marathi drama across a span of hundred and fifty years upto the contemporary, post-modern drama of twenty-first century. In his analyses of various forms of drama, he discusses the role of western influences on Marathi drama. In the process, he criticizes dramatists who resort to violence and vulgarities uncalled for in Marathi theatre often portrayed under the garb of modernity.

*Satyashodhak Tendulkar* (Tendulkar as a Seeker of Truth, 2009) is an analysis of Vijay Tendulkar’s plays by Dr. Yeshwant S Patne. Patne’s thesis imparts valuable information on Tendulkar’s one-act plays and his large repertoire of plays that are distinguished on the basis of themes and forms. Yet Patne’s work does not specify the artistic genius of Tendulkar in the larger context of indigenous languages at the pan-Indian level or even abroad.

There is a plethora of writings in Marathi on Tendulkar, quite a few works in English. Sudhakar Pandey and Freya Taraporewala (Barua) have edited two books, *Contemporary Indian Drama* (1990) that brings together a series of scholarly papers on contemporary Indian drama and theater and *New Directions in Indian Drama* (1994) that focuses on the plays of Tendulkar, Badal Sircar and Girish Karnad. The books embody a conceptual range of perceptive studies on significant playwrights, including Karnad, Tendulkar, Nissim Ezekiel, Badal Sircar, and Mohan Rakesh. The deliberation and
sophistication is quite stimulating to the exacting critical palate. They add immensely to our awareness of intrinsic value of the contemporary Indian drama by a collage of intuitive research articles on indigenous writers, exercising their talent in different languages at the pan-Indian level.

N.S. Dharan’s *The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar* (1999) is a study of seven of his plays. Dharan’s investigation of the dramatic world is diversified, yet plausible and absorbing. His treatment of Tendulkar as a unique artist, perceptive satirist reveals his sharp critical acumen and intellectual intimacy with the texts. However even Dharan circumvents the larger issues of Tendulkar as an Indian dramatist and appreciates him within the aegis of regional, more specifically linguistic parameters. The book fails to pertain to Tendulkar’s distinguished accomplishments as a Marathi writer within and beyond national frontiers.

*Ghashiram Kotwal: Critical Perspectives* (2001) edited by Vinod Bala Sharma and Vijay Tendulkar’s *Ghashiram Kotwal: A Reader’s Companion* (2003) are some of the recent books that offer critical commentary on the canonical play. These books restrict their definitive scope to an independent play and its performance. Undeniably the academic reflection on a single play attests the phenomenal expertise of Tendulkar who penned several plays that proved to be glittering stars across the skies of Indian Literature.

V.M. Madge’s *Vijay Tendulkar’s Plays: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* (2007) is a critical omnibus of the plays of Tendulkar and appraises his astonishing craft and concerns. It revalues his intersecting naturalism and humanism, his employment of Western techniques and Indian folk forms, his innovative use of language, structures and forms, his depiction of overt and covert violence in human beings and his keen and undaunted awareness of the vulnerability of women in Indian social hierarchy. It incorporates scintillating essays on the artistic uniqueness of Tendulkar’s oeuvre by esteemed scholars of Marathi literature such as V. B. Deshpande and Shanta Gokhale. One of the remarkable aspects of the book is the comparative essays on prominent playwrights from various languages across the country and illuminating essays from renowned actors Vikram Gokhale and Manoj Bhise. It is distinctly designed by a synthesis of essays on text and performance, which provides a touch of authenticity and
encapsulates the essence of dramatic art that operates through text and performance. It penetrates to the core of Tendulkar’s artistry but confines itself to the well-known plays, submerging the minor ones.

_Vijay Tendulkar: A Pioneer Playwright_ by Shailaja Wadikar presents the realistic situations mirrored in Tendulkar’s plays in a lucid manner. The work ranks Tendulkar with great playwrights like Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and Bertolt Brecht. The book probes the problematic nature of his plays and illuminates salient aspects like socio-cultural, psychological, existential, and feminist to mention a few. The interview with the playwright adds a new dimension to his plays. It seeks to unfathom the complex and intriguing thematic patterns of Tendulkar’s art and offers insights into his works.

Amarnath Prasad and Satish Barbuddhe’s *The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar: Critical Explorations* (2008) is perhaps the only book that encompasses a gamut of academic discourse ranging from earlier successful plays of Tendulkar to the most recent ones. Nevertheless, the analysis of play _Ghashiram Kotwal_ occupies almost half of the book and the play persists in its centrality to all the critical concerns. Along with three essays on the dramatic talent of Tendulkar, are a couple of essays on the popular yet controversial plays such as _Kanyadaan, Silence! The Court is in Session, Vultures_ and an essay each on his latest plays- _His fifth woman_ and _The Cyclist_. These essays ornately explicate Tendulkar’s art of dramatic technique, his concept of feminism and his realistic portrayal of man-woman relationship. However, the entire book focuses on individual plays and eschews comparative analysis within Tendulkar’s literary corpus or across the regional frontiers.

A review of the critical studies of Tendulkar’s plays reveals the inadequate efforts to fathom his endowment to Indian Literature and lop-sided critique of his literary achievements that relinquish his stature as one of the Indian dramatists to attain reputation at par with Western dramatists. Hence the present study aims at interpreting Tendulkar’s art in comparison with Tennessee Williams and establishing the authenticity of his dramatic aptitude by expounding the affinities and differences between the two playwrights. Such a probe into his plays would enhance the understanding of Tendulkar’s drama that shaped by Western influences nonetheless retains its distinct cultural spirit. It is assumed that Tendulkar’s art is not a mere, servile emulation of the western dramatists.
in general and Williams in particular but is a dexterous and genuine venture in its own right.

The present study aspires to undertake a comparative study of the plays written by Vijay Tendulkar and Tennessee Williams. Chapter I establishes a strong theoretical base for the application of Comparative approach to analyze the potential greatness of Tendulkar and Williams. Chapter II is an appraisal of enriched dramatic corpus of Tendulkar that reveals his artistic excellence. Chapter III is a critical appreciation of Williams’s dramatic art revealed through his thematic and stylistic innovations. Chapter IV is a comparative study of the literary interface between Tendulkar and Williams that records interesting parallelisms in their aesthetic accomplishments. Chapter V provides inferences drawn and comments based on the analysis made earlier.