CHAPTER FOUR
TENDULKAR’S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

The ability to create and depict fictional characters in such a way that the reader-audience perceives them as living beings is essential to the art of drama writing. This chapter examines Tendulkar’s art of characterisation and attempts to bring out its distinctive features.

Characterisation in Drama:

Characterisation is one of the chief elements of drama. The skill of a playwright is displayed through the creation of convincing individuals in addition to an effective treatment of themes in his plays. One of the key factors behind a playwright’s success and effectiveness is his art of characterisation. A playwright is expected to handle his characters in such a way that they appear as real human beings.

A playwright’s success in characterisation depends upon various factors. A creative playwright develops his characters by abstaining from trying to govern them but allows them to speak and act on their own impulse. The display of such intensity in the creation of characters saves them from becoming mere puppets in the hands of their creator and allows them to live and breathe like real human beings. The playwright can help the readers of his text in visualising the character portrayed by him by describing the dress and bearing, the looks and gestures, of a character in a graphic manner. The playwright can define the personality of his character by providing the necessary details in the stage directions. The characteristic features of
their appearance and behaviour should be indicated to the reader. The changes that come in their expression or demeanour at critical moments of action should be made clear to the reader. A skilful playwright has the knack of selecting and conveying significant details about his characters to the reader.

Unlike a novelist, the playwright cannot dissect the thoughts and feelings of his characters and comment on them. He has to allow his characters to reveal themselves through dialogue, action, expression and gestures. The novelist’s privilege of appearing as an expositor and critic from time to time is denied to the playwright. He can, however, do this by employing various dramatic devices in the play in a clever manner. A character in drama takes shape though the surrounding conditions, personal experiences and his reaction to them, and the influence of other people on his life. He may change his behaviour or thinking due to some exceptional crisis or circumstances in his life. A playwright’s success in characterisation depends upon his ability to show us the means by which the changes occur in a character. If a playwright can account for the behaviour of his characters by assigning proper causes to them, it gives power and truth to his character portrayal. The insight and skill that a playwright displays in his character delineation are the secret of his success.

The skill of a playwright is also judged by the range of his characters. Often a playwright is required to depict what he has only thought of, read about or heard. A skilful playwright can portray such characters convincingly if he has the power of absorbing and utilizing all kinds of material gathered from various sources. A realistic imagination working upon this material can make his character portrayal authentic. Thus the success in characterisation also depends upon the playwright’s knowledge of
the world and human nature that he has acquired through his own experiences as well as those of others. An intimate knowledge of the working of human nature, its common motives and passions, gives an authenticity to the playwright’s character delineation.

Unlike the novelist who enjoys a lot of space to develop his characters, the playwright is directly affected by the necessities of stage representation with regard to the treatment of his characters. He has to infuse life into his character by depicting a few important scenes in his life. Thus brevity and concentration are the essential conditions of characterisation in drama. The playwright has to depict a character through action in such a way that the story also progresses at the same time. He needs to master the skill of condensed treatment of character. He has to give a lot of thought to the qualities of his character that he wishes to bring into relief.

Another important condition of characterisation in drama is the impersonality which the playwright has to maintain. Portraying complex characters and the subtle motives behind their actions is quite a challenging task for the playwright. Unable to analyse the thoughts and feelings of his characters directly and comment upon them, the playwright discloses the personalities of his characters through the medium of the plot and the dialogues. The playwright brings out the intellectual and moral qualities of his men and women by making them face various crises and situations in their lives. Thus plot becomes an effective means of character exposition.

The playwright can use one of the characters in the play as the ‘chorus’ to offer comments on the action as well as link the various events. In ancient Greece, the chorus was a group of persons who commented on the action of the play. The role of
the chorus was taken by a single actor in Elizabethan drama. The contemporary playwrights have also used this convention to good effect. In earlier times, the use of the device of soliloquy was made to make the reader-audience aware of the character’s thoughts or to give information concerning other participants in the action. It is a means of the playwright to analyse and comment on the action. It is his means of taking the reader-audience down into the hidden recesses of a person’s nature. In the contemporary times, the use of this device has been given up as it is considered as unnatural. In its place, the playwright can use a character as a confidant to whom a main character reveals his private thoughts, motives and intentions. The confidant is a person to whom the speaker can unburden his soul without any restraint and in addition to that, he also plays a specific part in the action of the play.

**Tendulkar’s Views on Characterisation**

While delivering the Sri Ram Memorial Lectures for Performing Arts in 1997 in New Delhi, Tendulkar has expressed in detail his opinion and views on the art of characterisation in drama. While describing the process of his characterisation, Tendulkar says that he is something of an actor-playwright and emotes the lines of the character as he goes on writing them. This helps him in converting the utterance of a character into a complete and spontaneous expression of his personality. He changes the order of the words and sometimes leaves the sentences half-finished, just like the utterance of a person in real life. He points out the pitch of the voice, emphasis on certain words and the body language and gestures of a character in the script of his play. Such efforts on the part of the playwright help the character to come to life as soon as it enters the stage.
Tendulkar told Gowri Ramnarayan in an interview that he requires to visualise his characters before putting them on paper. He tries to make the characters come alive in his mind by allowing them to talk, act and move freely. He consciously learnt and developed the art of visualization of the characters through the long years of his apprenticeship. Tendulkar aimed at depicting human life and its problems arising out of the changes happening in an entire society. Helping the reader-audience view a character correctly is extremely important for Tendulkar. He manifested his characters’ actions in a way that accurately captured their purpose.

According to Tendulkar, the behaviour of a human being is very difficult to understand as he is a complex phenomenon. He sincerely tries to depict the elusive and everchanging human behaviour through his men and women. He does not leave out the inner contradictions while developing a character. That makes his characters more complex than those of other playwrights. His characterisation is multi-dimensional and fully convincing. Tendulkar had a wide experience of the world because of the different jobs that he had done in the early part of his career. He had travelled widely and met people in all walks of life. All these personal experiences and observations of society were utilized while sketching the characters in his plays in a convincing manner. He had a habit of trying to understand people thoroughly by observing them minutely. Being a journalist, he stood at the centre of various events from where he could see everything without being involved. This helped Tendulkar in developing an independent perspective of looking at the world at large. It also seems to have developed in him the habit of not taking sides and portraying his characters with detachment and impartiality.
Regarding the sources of his characters, Tendulkar told Elizabeth Roy in an interview that his characterisation “begins with a germ or an idea… sometimes just an incident someone has narrated, or a person who has met me maybe for a brief time but has left me guessing as to what kind of a character he or she can be, or even a news item which I read in the morning’s paper,… can even be some other play.”

Tendulkar used his wide experience of people and their mannerisms and behaviour in the delineation of his characters. He had developed a curiosity for people and the knack of observing them closely at an early age in his life. He also used to take note of the speech habits of people. All this data stored in his mind came handy while portraying the men and women in his plays. Even when a character was based on a real person, Tendulkar subjected it to a lot of changes during the process of its creation. Sometimes a character became the combination of different characteristics of different persons known to the playwright at some point of time in his life. The character, in short, did not remain a copy of a single person in real life.

Tendulkar gives great importance to the language his characters speak and their speech patterns. He says: “Characterization in a play is to a large extent though the dialogue. Therefore the playwright must have a mouldable and not a rigid style of writing. He must change his style with every character.” Tendulkar tries to give every character a speech pattern which is true to his background. He takes the culture, region and profession of a person into consideration for deciding his style of speaking. He believes that the characters may become dumb and lifeless puppets if such care is not taken while creating them. The fact that Tendulkar’s characters spoke
their own language in their separate personal styles gave an authenticity to his characterisation.

Tendulkar summed up the creative process of his characterisation in the following words: “I had to wait for days trying to conceive a set of characters for a play. I could not proceed to write a play unless I saw my characters as real life people, unless I could see them moving, doing things by themselves, unless I heard them emoting, talking to each other. I was never able to begin writing my play only with an idea or a theme in mind. I had to have my characters first with me—”

Tendulkar thought highly of his characterisation and the pains he took in creating his characters seem to justify his claim. He refrained from making his characters puppets and speaking his own piece of mind through them. He allowed them to have their own minds, ways and destiny.

**Characterisation in Tendulkar’s Plays:**

Tendulkar has made a deep impact on contemporary Indian theatre. He has dealt with the issues of social injustice and the loneliness of the disillusioned individual that arises from his conflict with the hostile society. There is a realistic portrayal of the contemporary men and women in his plays centring around various social problems. Giving vent to the miseries and sufferings of individuals appears to be the main concern of the playwright. Tendulkar has displayed a high level of competence in the delineation of his characters. They capture and keep our interest right from their entry in the play. The way Tendulkar sketches them in minute detail gives credibility to his characters. While focusing on different aspects of human nature, Tendulkar has presented modern man in all his complexities.
Tendulkar is a playwright with an acute social consciousness. He is intensely aware of what is going on in the world around him and faithfully reflects the strains and pressures of his milieu through his characters. He compels the reader-audience to ponder over the sorrows and sufferings of their fellow human beings. He shows a great dexterity in the delineation of his characters. They are marked by an intense realism. Tendulkar makes his characters seem real through a skilful portrayal of their actions, manner of thought and the distinctive qualities and traits of their personality. He shows a profound understanding of the psychology of his characters. He tries to maintain an objectivity in their presentation. In ‘The Poetics’, Aristotle has stated that making characters true to life is essential for successful characterisation. This yardstick is fully applicable to Tendulkar’s characters. Their virtues and weaknesses, joys and sorrows, loves and hatreds, are just like that of the ordinary human beings. Tendulkar’s highly individual outlook on and vision of life is reflected through his characters. G.P. Deshpande, a contemporary Marathi playwright and critic, observes that Tendulkar’s plays are notable for their uncompromising realism, merciless probing of human nature and candid scrutiny of individual and group psychology. As a realist, Tendulkar tries to show the human nature as it is with all its potential for cruelty and an inclination towards it, rather than to escape from it. Through his characters, Tendulkar expresses his awareness of the plight of contemporary human beings in today’s world, the rapid dehumanization of man and his great concern for the future of mankind. The multi-layered characters of Tendulkar are a result of his subtle observation of Indian social reality. He has explored many areas of human experience through the varied characters that he created. Some of his characters are
composites of contradictory qualities, struggling between emotion and intellect, seeking independence and yet submissive. There is a gradual unraveling of motivations and emotions of a character through which he attacks societal hypocrisy. Commenting upon the enigmatic nature of Tendulkar’s characterisation, Arundhati Banerjee observes that Tendulkar’s characters have the same prismatic quality associated with their creator and give forth new meanings as one turns them around in the light of one’s understanding. The women characters in Tendulkar’s plays include housewives, teachers, mistresses, daughters, slaves and servants. He brings a broad range of emotions in his plays through his penetrating and layered characterisation of these women. As Shanta Gokhale has suggested, Tendulkar’s characters are drawn from the widest range of observed examples and are allowed to inhabit the entire spectrum from the unbelievably gullible to the clever, from the malleable to the stubborn, from the conservative to the rebellious, from the self-sacrificing to the grasping. Tendulkar exposes the pitiable condition of women in our society through these characters. While presenting different types of people, he does not advocate or criticize their lifestyle and behaviour but presents them before us as they are. Through their inter-action, he explores life and its problems.

The individual impulse to freedom and the societal impulse to restrict it provides the basis of the characterisation of the protagonists in Tendulkar's plays. A careful reading of Tendulkar's plays brings to light the fact that his characters are either victimisers or victims. Sometimes there is a shift in their roles during the course of the play and the victimisers become victims and vice versa. The playwright points out the basic exploitative and oppressive nature of our society through the
behaviour of his characters. Through the depiction of the physical and mental tortures his characters inflict on each other, he brings out the overt as well as covert beastliness hidden inside human beings and their immense capacity for violence as its consequence. Tendulkar's characters in his eight plays translated into English and selected for the present study can be classified into four main categories based on the features that they have in common, i.e., the male protagonists, the female protagonists, the characters who function as the playwright's mouth-piece, and the secondary characters. Tendulkar has time and again stated that his characters are the most vital ingradient in his playwriting. It makes sense to approach Tendulkar's work through his characters and to examine what he tries to tell through them. He has created memorable male and female characters that help to reveal his social conscience. A detailed study of these characters helps us to understand the features of Tendulkar's art of characterisation and his vision of society and human life.

**Male Protagonists:**

Ramakant in *The Vultures*, the eponymous characters of Tendulkar’s plays *Sakharam Binder* and *Ghashiram Kotwal*, Jaisingh Jadhav in *Kamala* and Nath Devlalikar in *Kanyadaan* are the male protagonists in the plays under the present study. All of them have been portrayed as developing characters by the playwright. They are quite different from each other in behavioural traits, class, character and social position. They are bound by the common thread of their similar attitude of looking towards women as their property. They consider women as nothing more than the objects of satisfying their various needs in life. Catherine Thankamma rightly comments: "Whatever be their socio-economic background, Sakharam, Jaisingh,
Ramakant and Umakant in The Vultures, all have one thing in common - they see women as subject to be exploited, as possessions, not as individuals with feelings and desires of their own." Her remark can be safely applied to Ghashiram also as he is guilty of the heinous crime of sacrificing his daughter’s chastity in order to improve his social position. Though Nath's attitude of looking at women is liberal, he also ends up exploiting his daughter while trying to bring his dream of a casteless society into existence. Thus all the male protagonists in Tendulkar's plays appear as exploiters of women.

**Ramakant** : Along with the other wicked characters such as Pappa, Umakant and Manik in Tendulkar's play *The Vultures*, Ramakant is a symbol of man's overt bestiality. Ramakant's character is based on Tendulkar's perceptive observation of some cruel, crafty, unscrupulous and greedy men around him. A. P. Dani writes that the character of Ramakant bears testimony to Tendulkar's firm conviction that the vulturine instinct in man is deeply rooted and his endeavour to manifest the unspiritual and desolate sensitivities stemming from the pervasive alienation of devastated and devastating middle class man.¹²

Ramakant is a severe addict to liquor. His crooked deals have ruined the business set up with so much hard work and pains by his father and uncle. In his first entry on the stage, he is shown as beating and abusing the poor gardener who has come to request for his rightful money. His words and actions prove that there is no civility or decency in his nature. The frequent phone calls of his clients complaining about the inferior quality of his goods and services shed light on his dishonest practices. Instead of feeling gratitude towards his father for gifting him a well
established business and giving him a share of his property, he grudges the expenses that he has to incur on Pappa. He addresses his father as a "confounded nuisance" and a "bloody burden to the Earth". He has an inordinate lust for money and spends all his intelligence and energy in making money using all the means available. He is fond of gambling and drinking. Excessive drinking has made him impotent. When self-interest is concerned, he follows no moral or legal restrictions. Angry and sad at Ramakant's ill-treatment of him, Pappa bemoans at his folly of having fathered a son like him. Completely unmoved, Ramakant shamelessly retorts, "As the seed, so the tree! Did we ever ask to be produced?" (Act I, Scene II, 211).

In spite of all his cunningness and dishonest practices, Ramakant is not able to achieve much in the world. His financial condition goes on deteriorating day by day. On one hand he fails to handle his day-to-day business properly, on the other hand, he constantly dreams of a bungalow, car and a fat bank-balance. He is eager to live an affluent lifestyle. Unable to get money outside, he goes after his family members one by one. Uncle Sakharam's return and demand of money from Pappa gives Ramakant a clue of Pappa's hidden bank account. After frightening uncle Sakharam out of his wits and driving him away, he hatches a conspiracy with Umakant and Manik to rob Pappa. He pretends to be affectionate towards his father and cleverly gets him dead drunk. He feigns a fight with Umakant with Pappa in the middle and makes him fall on the ground. Afraid of getting injured, Pappa agrees to hand over his remaining money to Ramakant.

Manik, his younger sister, becomes Ramakant's next victim. He comes to know about Manik's affair with a rich old man. Together with Umakant, he embarks
on an unscrupulous enterprise of detaining Manik in the house by maiming her and extracting money from her rich lover by blackmailing him. The horrible act of maiming Manik is done by Ramakant without any scruples. The accidental death of Manik's lover results in a complete failure of his plan. Manik is discovered to be pregnant. In the name of protecting family honour, Ramakant kicks her in the belly repeatedly and aborts her. The actions of Ramakant show that he has lost his humanity completely and is living life just like a beast.

Ramakant treats Rama, his wife, in an unkind and callous manner throughout the play. He frequently takes her to the doctors and saints as he desperately wishes to have a son. He fails to realize that his excessive intake of liquor is responsible for this problem. He has no regard for his dutiful wife's sane advice. Her suggestion to leave the present business and to begin a new life somewhere else is unacceptable to him. Like a genuine egoist and male chauvinist, he orders Rama to look after the domestic chores and leave the things connected with the outside world to himself.

Ramakant asks Umakant to leave their ancestral house to him and go his own way. Umakant refuses and asks him to settle all the accounts related with their family wealth and jewelry etc. On realizing that Ramakant will not give him his share, Umakant tells him that his wife is carrying in her womb the child of Rajaninath. Ramakant is enraged and drives Umakant out of the house once and for all. However, his suspicion is aroused. In order to know Rama's feelings for Rajaninath, he talks to Rama tactfully and succeeds in eliciting her tender feelings for Rajaninath. He becomes convinced of Rama's having committed adultery and makes her abort the foetus. At the end of the play, we see him running away from the house in order to
escape from his creditors.

Tendulkar has painted Ramakant's character in a total black shade. There is no single good quality in him. Perhaps his wish to have a child is the only trace of humanity left in him. Shailaja Wadikar comments that Ramakant is a victim of his own evil nature which he has inherited from his father. Pappa's act of driving his brother Sakharam out of the business jointly set up by them proves that treachery and deceitfulness is in Ramakant's blood. Moreover, Ramakant's frustration at being childless and his failure to fulfill the desire of being wealthy also seems to drive him towards acts of cruelty and barbarism.

**Sakharam** : The eponymous character of Tendulkar's play *Sakharam Binder* is a remarkable study in the basic instinct of sexual urge and violence in a human being. The playwright has brought out the complexities in the human nature through his insightful portrayal of Sakharam, the book-binder, as a strange combination of sensibility and insensibility. Sakharam is depicted as a self-made man who lives life according to his own beliefs. He has a habit of lashing out at the world time and again. As he does not believe in the institution of marriage, he has chosen to remain a bachelor. He offers shelter to women who have been deserted by their husbands and makes them perform all the wifely duties in his house. Tendulkar portrays him as a self-centered pleasure-seeker who exploits the deserted women to satisfy his lust. Sakharam is a product of his circumstances as well as heredity. The lack of love from his parents and the constant beatings that he used to get from his cruel father had denied him a secure childhood. The bitter experiences in his family crushed his tender feelings. Even after running away from the house, there was no escape from misery.
for Sakharam as the world outside proved to be equally exploitative. Such experiences of life turned him into a rough and tough guy with strong leaning towards being violent. Shailaja Wadikar observes that the want of love has generated a kind of fierceness in Sakharam's temperament. As a result, he turns into a masochist who seeks pleasure in inflicting pains and miseries on others. Tendulkar seems to suggest that the upbringing of a man and the surroundings in which he grows-up make a person what he is.

As the play opens, we see that Lakshmi is the seventh woman brought to his house by Sakharam. While explaining the rules of living in his house to her, Sakharam condemns the hypocrisy of the people in the society. He accuses the husbands of giving an inhuman treatment to their wives. He also mocks at women for showing devotion to their cruel and uncaring husbands. It is ironical that he himself behaves in the same manner with his mistresses. He makes them slave for him all the time. According to V.M. Madge, the self-proclaimed unorthodoxy of Sakharam provides Tendulkar an opportunity to rail at the middle-class sensibilities of his audience and shock them by his unorthodox views and opinions. Sakharam appears to be a hypocrite who indulges in the same actions for which he blames others. Moreover, he is blissfully unaware of the contradictions in his behaviour and thinking.

The few months that Lakshmi spends with Sakharam brings out certain changes in his character. He begins behaving like a sober family man to some extent. He starts making an effort to reduce his intake of opium and liquor. However, Sakharam's relationship with Lakshmi cannot last for a long time due to the inherent differences
in their personalities. Soon Sakharam is fed up with the placid ways of Lakshmi. When Lakshmi objects to the presence of Dawood, his Muslim friend, during the worship of Lord Ganesha, Sakharam beats her severely and sends her away.

Sakharam brings Champa to his house as his next mistress. The goodness and sensitivity that Lakshmi had kindled in his nature completely evaporates now as Champa is an antithesis to Lakshmi. Sakharam is a complex character that undergoes profound changes with the changing circumstances. The physical beauty and aggressive nature of Champa inflames Sakharam's sexual hunger. He wallows in the mire of lust in Champa's company. Arundhati Banerjee aptly comments that Sakharam is transformed into a sensuous, lewd drunkard with thoughts only of sexual enjoyment in his relationship with Champa who is gross, sensuous and brazen in nature.  

Sakharam is fond of flaunting his virility in order to hide his loneliness. To his utter discomfort, he realizes the transient nature of his virility when Lakshmi returns to his house. Champa forces him against his wish to allow Lakshmi to stay in the house. The simultaneous presence of Lakshmi and Champa seems to bring out the two different strands in Sakharam's nature and results in his impotence. His ego is deeply hurt when Champa refuses to have intercourse with him citing his impotence as its reason. When Lakshmi discloses the fact of Champa's having an affair with Dawood to Sakharam, he is enraged and murders Champa by strangulating her. Once his fury subsides, Sakharam realizes the gravity of his crime and is reduced to a pathetic condition. All his life, he had prided himself for doing everything openly and not concealing anything from society like the hypocratic people whom he criticized.
did. Now he is forced to hide Champa's corpse in order to escape punishment from law. As he is bewildered and unable even to move, Lakshmi takes control of the situation and starts instructing him what he should do. He seems to have become a play-thing in the hands of Lakshmi at the end of the play.

According to Jonathan Kalb, an eminent drama critic, Tendulkar, instead of demonizing the coarse bookbinder, leaves the viewer with an understanding of his helplessness in a certain sense. Sakharam’s tragedy is the result of his unsuccessful attempt to exploit a corrupt system for personal advantage which leads him to lose everything he had hoped to protect. Sakharam keeps harping on the fact that the people in society indulge in the same acts as he does. But they try to hide their actions, whereas, he doesn’t. Through Sakharam’s character, Tendulkar seems to imply that everybody is the same, but some people hide what they are and others don’t. Thus Tendulkar tore the veil off the faces of middle-class people through the portrayal of Sakharam’s character.

**Ghashiram**: Tendulkar believes that violence and sexual urge are the basic instincts of human beings and natural traits of human nature. According to G. Mallikarjuna, the eponymous character of Tendulkar’s play *Ghashiram Kotwal* stands for the basic human instinct of violence and that of Nana Fadnavis in the same play stands for the instinct of sexual urge. Through these two characters and their relationship, Tendulkar wants to stress the abnormality of the tendencies that they exhibit. The playwright seems to imply that wherever there is a Nana Fadnavis, there is a Ghashiram, and vice-versa.

Ghashiram, a North Indian Brahmin, arrives in Poona in search of a fortune.
Unable to get a decent job, he becomes a Nachya – the supporting dancer, making mimicry in order to please the audience, and lives with Gulabi, the famous dancer in Bavannakhani, Poona’s red-light area. Ghashiram wins the favour of Nana Fadnavis, the chief minister of the Peshwa, while the latter visits Gulabi’s Kotha (dance-hall). When Nana twists his ankle, Ghashiram offers his back to Nana to rest his foot on. He also uses flattering words for Nana. It shows that Ghashiram is prepared to demean himself in order to get into the good books of influential people. Nana rewards him with his pearl necklace. Gulabi snatches the necklace from him. When Ghashiram objects to it, her servants beat him and throw him out of the place. Ghashiram is again humiliated when he attends the Dakshina ceremony in which the Peshwa rewards the Brahmins with gifts. Being a Kanauj Brahmin, Ghashiram is regarded as an alien in the Poona Brahmin Community and is therefore isolated. Instead of getting any gift, Ghashiram is unjustly accused of committing a theft and is beaten severely. Ghashiram had come with high hopes to Poona, but he only gets pain and humiliation. Mad with rage and grief, he vows to take revenge on the Poona society which has treated him in such a degrading manner. In order to teach a lesson to the Poona community, Ghashiram needs power. He perceives a chance of getting power when he sees that Nana wants his daughter, Gauri, to satisfy his lust. Ghashiram stoops to the level of a rank opportunist and he barters the chastity of his daughter with the Kotwalship of Poona. Though he is fully aware of his own wickedness in sacrificing the chastity of his daughter at the altar of his ambition for revenge, he suppresses his conscience. Thus Ghashiram’s overpowering desire for revenge transforms him into a beast.
After becoming the Kotwal, Ghashiram begins a reign of terror in Poona. Under the garb of maintaining law and order he starts persecuting the Poona Brahmins in a most inhuman manner. He does not think even for a moment that he is punishing an entire community which includes many innocent people, for the crimes committed by a few. He stretches his plan of vengeance to absurd limits. His plan of freeing Gauri from Nana’s clutches, however, does not succeed. Gauri dries while trying to get an abortion. Ghashiram’s grief and anger know no limits. He knows that Nana is responsible for Gauri’s death. He approaches Nana with murder in his heart. Nana succeeds in pacifying Ghashiram by suggesting that he will lose the Kotwalship of Poona if he dares to utter even a word against Nana. Ghashiram tamely surrenders to Nana’s authoritarian talk. This is a further degradation of Ghashiram. He decides to forget the death of his daughter in order to retain his Kotwalship.

After Gauri’s death, Ghashiram begins persecuting people in an even more ruthless and violent manner. Neela Bhalla observes that Ghashiram uses his tyrannies to assuage his own guilt and every blow that he strikes against hapless victims is a vindication to him of the crime against his daughter.¹⁹ Nana realizes that Ghashiram may become harmful to him in future. Therefore, he hands Ghashiram over to the bloodthirsty crowd of Poona Brahmins who are angry over the death of some Brahmins due to Ghashiram’s order to lock them in a narrow cell. The victims of Ghashiram’s cruelty now become his tormentors. They inflict all kinds of torture on Ghashiram and beat him to death. Tendulkar succeeds in giving a semblance of humanity to the beastly character of Ghashiram in his dying moments when he blames himself for his daughter’s death and accepts his suffering and death as a just
punishment of that crime.

**Jaisingh Jadhav**: Jaisingh, one of the central characters in Tendulkar’s play *Kamala*, is an ambitious and adventurous journalist who leaves no stone unturned to bring out the social maladies to light. He works very sincerely for his boss, Seth Singhania, the owner of an English newspaper. He is not averse to taking risks in order to expose the evil elements in society. Outwardly Jaisingh makes a show that he is devotedly working for a social cause. But the reality is that Jaisingh is after name, fame and money. He can go to any extent to achieve his ambition. He does not care for the feelings of his wife Sarita. He makes her work like a slave in the house. Tendulkar exposes the hypocrisy of Jaisingh through the ‘Kamala’ episode. He buys Kamala from a rural flesh market for Rs. 250. His intention is to present Kamala in a press conference to prove the going on of the flesh-trade. He does not allow Kamala even to bath or change her torn sari as it suits his purpose. He wants to present Kamala before public in the most miserable and abject condition so that he can win applause for rescuing such a sufferer. He just wants to use Kamala as a ladder to get money, reputation and fame. He is not really concerned about the plight of helpless women. Shailaja Wadikar observers that Jaisingh uses Kamala as a means by which he can get a promotion in his job and win reputation in his professional career. He does not concern himself with the thought of Kamala’s future after his press conference. After using her as a use-and-throw object, he sends her to an orphanage.

Jaisingh’s attitude towards his wife is not much different as he uses her only as an object of enjoyment and as a slave to look after his house. He does not give any importance to the fact that Sarita’s support and encouraging has helped him in
building a successful career. Catherine Thankamma aptly comments that Jaisingh remains totally indifferent to Sarita’s feelings. He expects Sarita to submit to his desire for intercourse whether she wants it or not and calls her a ‘bitch’ when she refuses to cooperate with him. Jaisingh who victimises Kamala as well as Sarita himself ends up as a victim at the end of the play. Thus he gets a treatment of his own medicine. Some powerful elements in society who do not like his expose of the flesh-trade pressurise Seth Singhania and Jaisingh is dismissed from the job. Through the character of Jaisingh, Tendulkar sheds light on the male egoism, domination, selfishness and hypocrisy of the modern success-oriented generation. Shorn of his usual arrogance and self-confidence, Jaisingh is a pitiable figure at the end of the play.

Nath Devlalikar: Nath is the male protagonist in Tendulkar’s play Kanyadaan. Tendulkar has depicted the transformation of Nath from an idealist to a realist as he realises the hollowness of his dream of creating a casteless society. In an interview, Tendulkar said that Nath is he himself and some other people of his generation. The playwright wanted to look critically at his own generation and its dreamy idealism as he was angry about what had happened to it.

Nath, an MLA, is a humanistic and liberal person. He believes in the essential goodness of man. He is of the opinion that even sinners and criminals can be reformed by treating them properly. He has taught his ideals and principles to his children, Jayaprabhash and Jyoti. Under the influence of her father’s idealistic thoughts, Jyoti decides to marry Arun, a young poet belonging to the backward class. When Jyoti informs Nath about her decision, he is overjoyed. Nath has been
championing the cause of eradication of caste distinctions from society all his life. The decision of his daughter to marry in another caste gives Nath a chance to put his words into practice. But Nath thinks about this marriage only from the point of view of a social reformer. He does not take into consideration the fact that there is lot of difference between the backgrounds and upbringing of Jyoti and Arun. The incompatibility of their culture and lifestyle may harm their union. Moreover, Jyoti confesses that she has not fallen in love with Arun. It is the effect of Arun’s poetry and her sympathy for him which probably results in her decision to marry him. Nath turns a blind eye towards all these facts. He thinks only about his favourite ideology and the chances of his dream becoming a reality. He fails in his duty as a father and ends up exploiting his daughter in pursuance of his favourite ideology. Though Seva, his wife and Jayaprakash, his son, are against Jyoti’s marriage with Arun, Nath backs her whole-heartedly and gets her married to Arun.

After spending a few months with Arun, Jyoti returns to her parents’ house. She complains that Arun treats her in an inhuman manner. She has decided to leave him for good. For Nath, this marriage is an ideological experiment. He is hell bent on making it work. Instead of realising Jyoti’s plight and solving her problems, he exhorts her to save the marriage as it is a significant social experiment. Jyoti decides to go back to Arun. Thus Nath is under the mistaken impression that experimenting with somebody’s life will change the society. He remains naïve even after years of social work. His daughter has to bear the brunt of Nath’s idealistic fervour. Arun kicks her in the stomach while she is in the sixth month of pregnancy. Nath is completely baffled to hear about Jyoti’s physical torture by Arun. He has recently
read Arun’s autobiography in which Arun has given a poignant expression to his humiliating experiences as a result of having born in a low class family. Nath cannot understand how a person who has been victim of oppression can inflict sufferings on others. Jayaprakash opens his eyes by telling him about the newspaper report of the persecution of Palestinians at the hands of Jews who were once persecuted. He says: “… yesterday’s victim is today’s victimizer...therefore, there is no hope of a man’s gaining nobility through experience, he can only become a greater devil.” (Act II. Scene II. 547)

Now Nath realizes that Arun’s torture of Jyoti is his way of taking revenge of the atrocities committed on his ancestors by upper caste people in the past. Nath is forced to alter his philosophy of life and give up his belief in the essential goodness of man under the pressure of the changed circumstances in his life. Moreover, Jyoti blames him for teaching her wrong principles and not following them himself. She breaks her relations with him and leaves his house never to return. Thus Tendulkar has depicted the tragedy of a person’s excessive and unrealistic idealism through the character of Nath.

**The Female Protagonists in Tendulkar’s Plays:**

Leela Benare, Vijaya, Rama, Lakshmi, Mitra, Sarita and Jyoti are the female protagonists in the plays under the present study. Like Tendulkar’s male protagonists, they are also developing characters. The common thread that binds them is their similar fate of getting exploited by the men. Kalindi Deshpande writes: “It is saddening to know that almost all his (Tendulkar’s) women characters meekly submit to the injustice, violence and harassment done to them. They seem to be helpless and
have no other alternative but to go through the way that life has chosen for them. With the exception of Vijaya and to some extent of Sarita and Lakshmi, all the other women protagonists are exploited by their male counterparts and end up as victims.

**Leela Benare**: Through the character of Leela Benare in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Tendulkar has highlighted the plight of woman in an exploitative, male-dominated society. Benare is a spinster in her early thirties. She is a school teacher. She is also the member of a drama troupe which gives performances of the mock law court to spread awareness in society. She is lively and enthusiastic by nature. At the beginning of the play, Benare is shown making audacious and amatory overtures to the docile villager, Samant. It seems as if she is ready to have an affair with him if he shows even the slightest inclination to it. Samant, being an innocent simpleton, does not understand her moves. So the matter ends there.

Benare’s relations with the members of her group do not seem to be cordial. She expresses her contempt for them through her sarcastic comments to Samant. After their arrival, Benare begins making fun of them. An interesting thing to note is that her colleagues are failures in their respective professions and in some cases, even in their lives. They appear to be jealous of Benare who is quite successful in her career. They also do not like the way Benare makes fun of them. They are looking for an opportunity to discipline her as they do not approve of her unconventional behaviour. The mock-trial gives them an opportunity to settle their scores with Benare. They gang up against her and hurt her feelings deeply by making her private affairs public.
Tendulkar has rendered the womankind's psyche through the character of Benare. Benare has committed the crime of indiscreetly offering her body to the two men who entered her life at different times. When she was a teenager, she got enmeshed in liason with a maternal uncle who used to praise her blossoming youth. She did not realise that her uncle was merely using her. When she insisted on marriage, he ran away. Benare's family members held her solely responsible and the deep shock and sense of shame which she got resulted in her trying to commit suicide but she was saved. Then she ventured into a love-affair with Damle at a mature age. He made her pregnant and refused to accept the responsibility of the child. Actually Benare had behaved in a very immature manner in this case. She knew that Damle was a married man and still she went too far in the relationship. Thus Benare's failure to keep a check on her bodily desires is responsible for her plight.

Benare wants to give birth to her child. She also knows that the child must have a father's name attached to his name. Otherwise, the society will make its life a hell. So she starts begging for alms of marriage to men such as Ponkshe and Rokde who are inferior to her. Her flirting with Samant at the beginning of the play is probably an effort to entice him in a prospective romance and marriage. Hemang Desai writes that Benare's flirtations are a proof of her inveterate belief that maternity outside wedlock is deemed abysmal from the social stand point and that it can be legitimized only by trapping a man in the bond of espousal irrespective of his low-browness and crudity. Thus it is Benare's maternal urge and her anxiety for the well-being of her offspring that leads her to propose to these men.
Benare remains completely silent during the dissection of her personal life by her fellow actors under the garb of a mock-trial. Even if she tries to speak, she is silenced by them. She is given a chance of defending herself at the end of the trial. Tendulkar shows that all the characters remain in a frozen state during her long reply. The playwright seems to suggest that her reply falls on deaf years. Benare seems to have accepted the Court's verdict of the destruction of the infant in her womb. Tendulkar's stage directions about Benare's condition at the end of the play "Benare feebly stirs a little. Then gives up the efforts." (Act III. 120) seem to indicate this.

**Vijaya:** Through the character of Queen Vijaya in his play *Encounter in Umbugland,* Tendulkar has depicted the indomitability and grit of the human spirit. She is one of the rare human beings in Tendulkar's plays who comes out successful in the battle of life. While praising Tendulkar's skilful portrayal of Vijaya who succeeds in turning the tables on her adversaries, Arundhati Banerjee observes: "There is a definite development in her from a headstrong, self-opinionated but politically inexperienced young princess to an intelligent yet whimsical ruler who devises her own (successful) methods of vanquishing her enemies."²⁵

Vijaya's freedom-loving nature and her lack of interest in the life of the palace is highlighted at the beginning of the play in her wish to leave the palace and live at a place where there won't be any restrictions on her. She is innocent, playful and a little mischievous. She is extremely fond of playing games such as hopscotch. Prannarayan, the eunuch attendant, has looked after her since her childhood. Naturally, she trusts him and there is a lot of mutual affection and regard between them.
The untimely death of King Vichitravirya forces Vijaya into the field of politics. At first, she performs her duties according to the instructions of her ministers. But the training which she receives from Prannarayan soon transforms her into a seasoned politician. She refuses to be spoon-fed by the ministers. She becomes aware of their secret ambitions and deceitful nature. She learns to keep a check on them. The unending conflict with the ministers makes Vijaya miserable at times. She longs for the carefree life of her past. She confides to Prannarayan about her worries and he offers her mental support. He tells Vijaya that a ruler has to become dehumanised in order to be successful. Vijaya succeeds in suppressing her humanity after learning to enjoy power. Though Vijaya becomes cunning and crafty with the passing of time, the human aspect of her nature is revealed through her affectionate relationship with Prannarayan.

After the successful completion of her first year at the helm, Vijaya faces a grave crisis in her political career. She prepares a plan for the upliftment of the Kadamba community. Her genuine concern for the welfare of the Kadamba tribe prompts her to do this. But the motive of improving her own position in Umbugland is also hidden behind her pure motive of doing justice to the poor people. The ministers are unhappy with Vijaya as she has refused her consent to some of the laws they wished to enact. They realise that Vijaya needs their consent to her plan and intentionally refuse it. This leads to an encounter between Vijaya and her ministers for political supremacy. Vijaya decides to implement the plan on her own. So she declares emergency and takes the complete power of the state in her hands. The ministers hatch a conspiracy of getting Vijaya killed by inciting their supporters to
gather a mob and attack the palace. Vijaya has developed an efficient secret service and comes to know about the conspiracy in time. She turns the tables on the ministers by speaking to the mob in a clever manner and turning their anger against the ministers. The way Vijaya speaks whatever comes to her mind and still succeeds in pacifying the mob clearly shows that she has mastered the art of fooling the masses. The ministers give up and submit to her autocratic rule. Thus Tendulkar has depicted the modern liberated woman through the character of Vijaya who succeeds in the face of quite hostile circumstances with the help of her self-belief and strong will.

**Rama:** Tendulkar has sketched Rama's character in his play *The Vultures* in the mould of an ideal Indian woman, dutiful, kind and submissive. Rajaninath, her brother-in-law, describes her as an innocent doe who, after marriage, had come to a place where vultures lived in the shape of men. She did all her work as a wife, sister-in-law and daughter-in-law dutifully. But she never received a kind word or an appreciative look from anybody. Ramakant, her husband, never considered her as anything more than an object of enjoyment and a slave.

Rama's unquestioning endurance of suffering in the face of the severe mental torture inflicted on her by her family members establishes her identity as a typical traditional Indian woman. Though she does not like the words and actions of her family members, she does not utter even a single word against them. She continues to suffer silently. Through Rama's character, Tendulkar seems to suggest that even the virtuous and innocent people have to suffer untold miseries because of the proximity of vicious people. Rama's suffering results from the vulture-like tendencies of her
degraded family members. Describing her agonies while trying to survive in the house of vultures, Rama says to Rajaninath, "Every day, a new death, Every minute a thousand million deaths. A pain like a million needles stuck in your heart. Blinding you, maddening you with pain." (Act II, Scene II, 240) This is how she has lived her life in her husband's house. Though it is extremely painful, she cannot think of any alternative either.

Rama's maternal longing remains unfulfilled due to Ramakant's impotency. She is fed up with the frequent visits to doctors and saints. She is fully aware of the cause of her barrenness, her husband's excessive drinking. But she does not dare to tell this to him in his face. Sometimes she thinks of committing suicide to end her miserable existence. Through her long and moving speech in Act II, Scene II, the playwright brings out the plight of Rama in the Pitale household quite clearly. She feels that her womb is sound and healthy. She was born to become a mother. It is the weakness of Ramakant, her drunkard husband, that is fully responsible for her childlessness. Rama's self-expression in her speech is just like the eruption of a volcano after years of silence.

Rama's intense yearning to be a mother leads her in having an illicit relationship with Rajaninath, her half brother-in-law. For the first time she comes out of her traditional and conventional way of life and tries to assert her individuality by becoming pregnant from Rajaninath. Her decision is morally incorrect. However, it can not be denied that it is the single humane relationship in the play. Rama and Rajaninath are bound by the common threads of goodness and innocence. It finally brings them together. Rama who has been portrayed as timid and submissive
throughout the play willfully seduces Rajaninath with a view to become pregnant. The playwright succeeds in making it clear that it is not lust but Rama's genuine grief at being childless which makes this happen. Rama's variant behaviour does not last long. Ramakant comes to know about her adultery from Umakant. He aborts her forcibly. It is as if the last hope in her life is gone. She becomes a totally lifeless body hereon. Ramakant becomes bankrupt. While running away from his creditors, he takes Rama with him. She follows him mutely to go wherever he leads her. It is clear that there is no joy or hope in her about the life in future. Through Rama's character, Tendulkar brings out the lack of poetic justice in life and the unjust suffering of good people due to the wicked actions of vicious people.

**Lakshmi**

Lakshmi, in Tendulkar’s play *Sakharam Binder*, is one of the most intriguing characters created by the playwright. Lakshmi is Sakharam's seventh mistress. Initially, she appears to be helpless, submissive, innocent and religious. She gets transformed into a fearless and cunning schemer during her struggle for survival along with Champa in Sakharam’s house at the end of the play. When Lakshmi appears on the stage for the first time, she appears to be an average Indian woman who is religious, dutiful and docile. She is quite simple and meek and appears to be in awe of Sakharam. She looks after the household work as per his instructions in the most obedient manner. She also submits to Sakharam's demands for physical pleasure without any protest. Her habit of conversing with ants and crows establishes her as a sensitive and delicate human being.

The most dominant trait in Lakshmi's personality is her unshakable faith in God and religion. She accepts Sakharam as her husband in her heart and even secretly
wears a 'Mangal-Sutra' in his name secretly. She tries to make Sakharam observe certain customs and traditions related to religion. In observing the religious rituals, Lakshmi is almost a fundamentalist. She can go to any extent in behaving as per what she believes to be morally correct. She cannot accept Dawood's presence during the worship of Lord Ganesha. Though she knows that Dawood is Sakharam bosom-friend, she objects to it and pays its price heavily. Sakharam beats her severely and drives her out of the house.

After leaving Sakharam's house, Lakshmi goes to live with her nephew and his wife. They throw her out of the house on the charge of stealing. Lakshmi who still thinks of Sakharam as her husband returns to him. All the abusing and beating of Sakharam cannot change her mind. Realising that Champa has taken her place, Lakshmi agrees to play a secondary role to her. She accepts all the conditions imposed on her by Champa. She does not like the way Champa treats her husband, Shinde. She becomes sympathetic towards Shinde and tries to comfort him by offering food. She notices that Champa remains absent from home every afternoon. She becomes suspicious and follows Champa. She finds out that Champa is having an affair with Dawood. Her moral sense is outraged by Champa's behaviour. She cannot, however, tell this to Sakharam. It is only when Sakharam, hurt because of Champa's charge of impotency, decides to throw her out of the house that Lakshmi discloses Champa's secret to Sakharam. This leads to Champa's murder by Sakharam.

A playwright's thoughts about life and his world view guide him, consciously or unconsciously, in the treatment of his characters. Tendulkar believes that when circumstances push a person to the wall, it is not only natural but even justifiable for
him to become aggressive. There is no other option left to Lakshmi but to disclose the fact of Champa's unfaithfulness to Sakharam in order to save herself from being thrown out of the house. Thus Lakshmi, trapped by circumstances, changes from a simple, generous and sensitive woman into a cunning, ruthless and vicious lady and becomes responsible for Champa's death at the hands of Sakharam. After the murder, Sakharam is in a state of shock, frightened out of his wits by his own action. By helping him in hiding Champa's corpse, Lakshmi manages to take him under her total control at the end of the play. There is, no doubt, a question mark over Lakshmi's future as it is bound with the fact whether Sakharam escapes from the clutches of law or gets caught. Through Lakshmi's character, Tendulkar appears to suggest that a person who bravely fights against hostile circumstance can win the battle of life irrespective of whether his actions are morally right or wrong.

Mitra: Tendulkar’s delineation of Mitra’s character in A Friend’s Story bears testimony to his sensitive handing of a controversial issue. While portraying Mitra (Sumitra Dev) who is a lesbian, Tendulkar sheds light on the problems in the lives of individuals who are suffering from certain physical deformities. The playwright establishes Mitra’s differentness through the portrayal of her thinking, action, manners and gestures. Bapu, the Sutradhar of the play and Mitra’s sole friend in the world, describes his first impression of Mitra in following words: “She was different from all the other girls… there was a masculine vigour in Sumitra Dev’s stride and speech. She was carefree, her laughter came in loud bursts. She had eyes which met you in straight combat.” (Act I. 419). It is through Bapu’s observation of Mitra’s actions and his remarks on her behaviour that Mitra’s personality is gradually
revealed to us.

A major crisis in Mitra’s life occurs when she becomes aware of her physical deficiency for the first time. She had enjoyed the company of boys and their games right from her childhood. But when she did not feel any physical thrill in the company of her prospective bridegroom, she did an experiment to check herself. She tried to have intercourse with the family servant. The truth dawned on her that she could never become a man’s partner in the act. She was so greatly disturbed by the truth about her own nature that she tried to commit suicide. However, she was saved.

With the passing of time Mitra learned to live with the truth. When she was playing a male character in a college play and took Nama, the female lead, in her arms during a romantic scene, a new dimension of her personality became known to Mitra. She could feel the thrill and excitement that she had not felt in man’s company. Mitra found herself falling in love with Nama. Without giving any thought to social norms, she decides to follow her heart and make Nama her girl-friend. After a while she succeeded in doing so. But Mitra’s happiness was short-lived. Nama is already having an affair with Manya Dalvi, the college ruffian. Manya refuses to let Nama go. Mitra’s failure in her affair with Nama and her conflict with Manya which leads to his publicly exposing her abnormality, ultimately results in her committing suicide.

It shows that the society cannot tolerate Mitra’s violation of its norms. Even her family members do not support her. Her friend Bapu is her only support. Rohini Hattangady comments that Bapu is aware of the great restlessness that is hidden behind Mitra’s full-throated laughter and her “I don’t care attitude” and he tries to understand her and shows care and concern for her.27 But Mitra wrecks her friendship
with Bapu due to her own actions. She tries to dominate Bapu and expects him to do everything as per her wishes. She exploits Bapu by frequently demanding money from him and also using his room for her meetings with Nama. She does not feel any remorse when Bapu gets beaten by Manya due to Mitra’s forging the handwriting of Bapu for an anonymous letter. Bapu advises Mitra against pestering Nama if she does not wish to continue her relationship with her. But Mitra does not listen to him, so their friendship is broken. Mitra becomes all alone in the world as Bapu was her only mental support. Mitra’s personality deteriorates rapidly after her separation with Bapu. She becomes a prostitute. She even starts drinking. Finally, she commits suicide. Thus Tendulkar depicts, through the character of Mitra, the tragedy of an individual who becomes a victim of society’s apathy as well as her own stubbornness and selfishness.

Sarita: Through the character of Sarita, Jaisingh’s wife, in his play Kamala, Tendulkar has given an interesting picture of a modern Indian woman who is caught between the opposite pulls of tradition and modernity. According to Shibu Simon, Tendulkar exposes the chauvinism intrinsic in the modern Indian male who believes himself to be liberal through his delineation of Sarita’s character. Though Sarita is an educated urban lady, she is treated with scant respect by her husband, Jaisingh. Moreover, Sarita is not even aware of the slave-like existence to which Jaisingh has reduced her. While Jaisingh remains absent from home for long periods, she looks after everything dutifully. She does everything that is possible to please Jaisingh. When she sees Jaisingh using Kamala, whom he has bought to prove the prevalence of flesh-trade, as a commodity, her eyes are opened. She understands Jaisingh’s real
attitude of looking at her as only an object of enjoyment and as a caretaker of the house. Shailaja Wadikar observes that Sarita realises that she is bound to her husband in the wedlock to slave for him permanently after the entry of Kamala in her house. Sarita decides to change her condition and starts asserting her individuality. There is a marked change in her behaviour towards her husband. Earlier she used to defend Jaisingh in whatever he did. Now she starts defying him. She objects to Jaisingh’s decision to send Kamala to an orphanage. She refuses to accompany him to a party. She is so angry and frustrated because of her husband’s behaviour that she thinks of arranging a press conference to expose Jaisingh in front of the world. She even refuses to submit to Jaisingh’s desire for physical intimacy.

Sarita’s rebellion, however, is short-lived. She comes to know that Jaisingh has been sacked by his employer. Seeing that Jaisingh is feeling disgruntled at the way he has been treated by his employer, Sarita postpones her rebellion. Thus Tendulkar has portrayed Sarita as a modern woman who can probe her inner mind, desires and ambitions. She is mentally prepared for the struggle with society to assert her self identity. But she is also, in the words of Shanta Gokhale, a compassionate human being who defers her rebellion against her husband as he is in an acute need of her moral support. Sarita is a changed personality at the end of the play. She has become conscious of her identity and is determined to change her life in future.

**Jyoti**: Through the character of Jyoti in his play *Kanyadaan*, Tendulkar brings out the tragic end of a girl who is obstinate and does not retrace her steps even after realising that her choice of life-partner has gone horribly wrong. Jyoti is the daughter of Nath, a politician with socialist leanings. Obedient and dutiful, she has imbibed all
the ideals and principles of her visionary father. She is determined to embark on a path of truth and goodness shown to her by her father. When Arun, a boy belonging to the backward class, proposes to her, Jyoti agrees to marry him. She does not realise that her belonging to an upper caste family and the issue of casteism deeply rooted in our society as well as in Arun’s mind will wreck her marriage in future. Through the depiction of Jyoti’s physical and mental torture at the hands of her husband, Tendulkar sheds light on the problem of casteism and its effects on our society.

Jyoti has not fallen in love with Arun. There is no surge of intense feelings in her heart about Arun. When he proposes to her, she accepts it. Thus she appears to be in a very confused state of mind. Her father, however, fails to give her proper guidance as he thinks only about the chance this marriage will give him of the abolition of caste system. Nootan Gosavi observes that Nath is overjoyed by the prospective marriage not because his daughter has found a good husband but because it will fulfill his long-cherished dream of breaking the caste barriers. Both Jyoti and Nath fail to foresee the disastrous consequences of their decision.

Jyoti’s life becomes so miserable in just a few months after marriage that she is forced to return to her parents. Arun treats her in an inhuman manner. Every night he comes home dead drunk and beats her. Nath does not want her marriage to fail. He appeals to Jyoti to save the marriage as it is an important ideological experiment aimed at the removal of casteism. Nath believes in the essential goodness of man and trusts Jyoti to improve Arun by her love and care. Tendulkar brings out a father’s exploitation of his daughter in pursuance of his favourite ideology through Jyoti’s character. By adhering to his idealistic philosophy, Nath brings untold miseries upon
his daughter. Arun comes and creates a scene while asking Jyoti to come back to him. Jyoti decides to go back to him in order to put an end to the disturbance created in her parents’ house.

Jyoti realises that Arun tortures her because he sees in her a representative of the upper class people who have exploited his ancestors in the past. She realises the inadequacies in the theory of man’s essential goodness. Arun’s brutal behaviour has convinced her of the essential beastliness of man. She is angry with Nath for instilling a false view of life in her. She is completely disillusioned with Nath as she understands the faulty nature of his approach towards her marriage. As a result, she disowns him as her father at the end of the play and prohibits from meddling in her life. She decides to stay with Arun and mutely suffer all the tortures inflicted by him. Thus Jyoti chooses a path of wilful self-destruction.

The Mouth-Pieces:

A distinct feature of Tendulkar's characterisation is his use of some of his characters as the mouth-pieces. Unlike a novelist, a playwright cannot convey his feelings, thoughts and emotions directly to the readers. So he resorts to the use of the speeches of some of his characters to convey his point of view to the reader-audience. Tendulkar's characters such as Prannarayan, Rajaninath, Bapu and Kakasaheb function as his mouth-pieces and make the playwright's ideas on certain issues clear to us. They are commentators on human life and the speakers of truth as the playwright perceives them. Through these characters, Tendulkar's feelings, opinions, aspirations and his view of the world become known to us.
**Prannarayan**: Tendulkar has delineated the character of Prannarayan, a eunuch, in his play *Encounter in Umbugland* as a person having a deep insight into human life and the intricacies of politics. Prannarayan is the narrator as well as a character in the play. He is the chamberlain of the Queen's Apartment. He is a friend, philosopher and guide of Vijaya. He teaches Vijaya the intricacies of politics. It is his tutelage which transforms Vijaya from an immature, inexperienced girl into a cunning and resolute politician. Shailaja Wadikar comments that Tendulkar throws light on the ugliness and futility of power game which is closely linked with conspiracy and treachery through the character of Prannarayan. He makes a lot of efforts to guide Vijaya in ruling the country. He teaches her political diplomacy and the psychology of the people. Prannarayan introduces the play and acts as a neutral commentator throughout the action. The playwright seems to voice his opinions about life and politics through Prannarayan's philosophical utterances which are full of wisdom. Tendulkar makes the reader-audience aware of the ugliness and futility of the power game and the intricate intrigues and corruption involved in it through Prannarayan's utterances. N. S. Dharan aptly comments that Tendulkar seems to have drawn heavily on his own observations of the world and its inhabitants in his portrayal of Prannarayan's character. He teaches Vijaya that appearances are deceptive and one should not get misled by them. His guidance proves to be of immense help to Vijaya while coping with the falsity and treacheries of her ministers. Though Prannarayan is a eunuch, he is regarded by Vijaya as more manly than the false men that she has come across in the field of politics.
Rajaninath: Tendulkar has sketched Rajaninath as a sensitive, kind and good hearted individual in his play *The Vultures*. Being an illegitimate son of Pappa (Mr. Hari Pitale), Rajaninath is cursed to live a pathetic life right from his birth. Pappa has neither completely disowned him nor looked after him properly. He lives an abject existence in the garage of the Pitale household. He is just like an innocent lamb living in the midst of his vulture like family members. He is a much neglected, much hated and lonely being. The fact of his illegitimacy is always at the back of his mind. He has nothing but hatred for Pappa because of this. He is fully conscious of the vulture-like nature of his siblings. They cannot tolerate his existence and their hatred is mutual.

Rajaninath was just a boy when Rama had entered the Pitale household after her marriage with Ramakant. She had great sympathy for Rajaninath and looked after him in spite of her husband's instruction against it. It is natural that Rajaninath has great affection for Rama, his sister-in-law, who has supported him through his tender years. He is fully conscious of her suffering. But he cannot do anything for her.

He says:

“She laid on me

The burden of her oath.

Again and again,

It was her oath, and

I kept it. I didn't speak.” (Act I. Scene I, 205).

The mental torture of Rama by her family members made him restless at times. Rama's strict instruction to him not to interfere, however, stopped him from helping
her. He was reduced to a state of inactivity. He is a mute witness to Rama's silent sufferings. Because of his great affection for her, Rajaninath also suffered an unbearable misery.

Rajaninath is fully conscious about Rama's intense longing to bear a child. That's why, he does not oppose her when she turns to him in order to become pregnant. It is his sensitivity towards Rama's yearning to become a mother that results in his having an illicit relationship with her. Arundhati Banerjee observes that the sexual aspect of Rajaninath's relationship with Rama is merely an extension of his love for her and is the only redeeming feature in the morbid and claustrophobic atmosphere of the Pitale family. Deeply concerned with Rama's plight, he wants to make her happy. Though morally wrong, it is a tender and humane relationship. According to Samik Bandyopadhyay, Rajaninath gets a release from his sense of shame about his connection with the family of vultures through his illicit relationship with Rama. Referring to the pitious condition of himself and Rama, he says: “A curse that's on us... On us all. If you at least can escape that curse - why shouldn't you? If I can be used for that, why should I say 'no'? Why? Virtue and vice are for other people! For us on whom this terrible curse has fallen, there is nothing but this curse. And a burning body. A burning mind.” (Act II, Scene II, 243). This relationship results in the only act of creation in a world of degeneration and destruction in the Pitale household. Rama becomes pregnant with his child. When Ramakant comes to know about this, he aborts her. It seems to suggest that Tendulkar sees the vision of world as a place where the forces of evil prove to be too powerful for the forces of good.
Rajaninath has no attraction for wealth and property. Pappa approaches him with the proposal of getting the property back from his legitimate sons through a court-case. He is ready to make Rajaninath his heir for helping him in this enterprise. But the very idea of inheriting the property which has caused such violence and cruelty is detestable to Rajaninath. He is fully aware of the evil consequences of greed and refuses to help Pappa. At the end of the play, Rajaninath prays to God to show the right path to his degraded family members though he realises the helplessness of their condition.

Rajaninath has a dual role to play in *The Vultures*. In addition to being a character, he also functions as a *Sutradhar* (Presenter and conductor of a theatrical performance). It is through his memories and poetry that we come to know about the incidents that have happened in a span of twenty two years. Rajaninath represents the human sensibility and point of view. For the most part of the play, he is an aloof observer. He uses a gentle and poetic language while describing the good and pure Rama. While talking about the human vultures, he uses an ugly imagery and mentions mangy dogs, lepers, death-heads, skeletons and rotting noses. He stands for the playwright himself who champions the cause of the good while criticizing those who destroy all that is good in life. The objectivity and impartiality in presentation and compassion for the victims, the qualities associated with Tendulkar as a playwright, are found in Ramakant too. Thus he is a mouth-piece through which Tendulkar presents his vision of the evil in life and his deep compassion for the victims.

**Bapu**: Tendulkar has sketched the character of Bapu (Shrikant Marathe) in
Friend's Story as a person who thinks of himself as a non-entity but who is very kind and generous by nature. Bapu is the narrator as well as a character in the play. Tendulkar has written that the character of Bapu is based on one of his actor-friends who had witnessed an incident in which a girl wrecked her life as a result of her having a same sex affair.35

Bapu sees Mitra for the first time when she takes admission in his college. He is bewitched by Mitra’s personality but lacks the courage to go and meet her directly. He is meek and mild and appears to be suffering from inferiority complex. Once he finds a photograph of Mitra lying on the ground and returns it to her. A unique friendship develops between Bapu and Mitra. It seems that Mitra does not feel self-conscious at all in Bapu’s company. She realises his kind and harmless nature. She confides everything to him. Bapu shows the strength of his mind when he does not desert Mitra after hearing about her physical deficiency. It requires courage to stand by an abnormal and unconventional person. His attitude towards Mitra does not change even when she confides to him about her having fallen in love with Nama. It appears that Bapu is blinded by his affection for Mitra. That’s why, he helps Mitra in her lesbian relationship without bothering about the issues of morality and social norms.

Bapu stands beside Mitra through thick and thin. He constantly forgives Mitra’s wrongdoings though he quarrels with her at times. According to Rohini Hattangady, Bapu acts almost like a mother to Mitra who opens her heart to him, which she had not even done with her real mother.36 Mitra’s selfish and insensitive behaviour breaks Bapu’s heart and finally he deserts her. Mitra is unable to survive
in the hostile world without Bapu’s mental support. She takes to drinking wine and becomes a prostitute. She wails: “I lied to my mother, but not to him. You know that? Told him what I didn’t tell anyone. He – he was my mother. Mother-Bapu. Mother-Bapu.” (Act III. 492). Angry with herself as well as with Bapu, Mitra commits suicide. Bapu however cannot be blamed for her death. The playwright’s understanding of the complexities in the lives of abnormal persons and his compassion for those who become the victims of their own wrongdoings comes out through the character of Bapu and the sympathetic treatment that he gives to Mitra.

Kaka Saheb: Being a journalist himself, Tendulkar is aware of the defects that have crept in the world of media. Through the character of Kaka Saheb in his play *Kamala*, the playwright voices his opinion about the current state of this institution and also suggests remedies to rectify its faults. Tendulkar portrays Kaka Saheb as a journalist belonging to the old school for whom journalistic activity is a means of spreading awareness in society and removing the social problems. Throughout the play, Kaka Saheb keeps objecting to Jaisingh’s sensational style of journalism. He suggests Jaisingh that if he really wants to solve the social problems, he should join a vernacular newspaper. The English newspaper is not understandable to majority of the people. Kaka Saheb clearly realises the selfish motives behind Jaisingh’s adventurous journalism. According to Shailaja Wadikar, Tendulkar throws light on the exploitation of women in society for centuries through the character of Kaka Saheb. It seems that Kaka Saheb does not mind Jaisingh’s insensitive treatment to Sarita, his wife, too much. When Sarita expresses the thought of rebelling against Jaisingh, Kaka Saheb tries to calm her down by suggesting that all men are like that.
The Secondary Characters:

There are numerous characters in Tendulkar's plays under the present study who are not fully developed individuals. These characters appear to be types and not complex human beings. The behaviour, thinking and actions of these characters make them representatives of certain types of people in society. The sensitive and tender-hearted characters represent tendencies such as simplicity, innocence and submissiveness. The insensitive and cruel characters represent tendencies such as selfishness, meanness and crookedness. Some of these characters are depicted by Tendulkar as working in a group. Most of them remain uninfluenced during the progress of the action and thus, are stationary or static characters.

The members of the theatre group in Silence! The Court is in Session: The members of the theatre group that comes to perform at a village includes, besides Benare, characters such as Mr. Kashikar, Mrs. Kashikar, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik and Balu Rokde. One of the members, Professor Damle, remains absent and we know about him only from the utterances of other characters. All these characters are outwardly respectable members of middle class society but they bring themselves into disrepute by their cruel and callous behaviour towards Benare. According to Arundhati Banerjee, the thinking and behaviour of Benare's fellow-actors reflect their petty, circumscribed existences fraught with frustrations and repressed desires and they are expressed in their malicious and spiteful attitude towards Benare. A latent sadism exists in these ordinary, nondescript people though outwardly they are decent folk. These characters are not distinguishable from each other as clearly characterised individuals. They operate as a group and symbolise man's overt bestiality. Anju Bala
Agarwal comments that these characters represent man's hunting instinct at the deepest level and being members of the middle class, they think it as their right to sit in moral judgment over society. Sukhatme, Ponkshe and Karnik are failures in their respective professions. Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar are frustrated because of their childlessness. Balu has not been able to attain an independent adult existence. Professor Damle makes a mockery of the noble profession of teaching by indulging in an extramarital relationship with Benare and then refusing to accept the responsibility of the child in her womb. During the mock-trial, these characters inflict a great mental torture on Benare. Through the portrayal of these characters, Tendulkar brings out the immense capacity for violence hidden inside ordinary people.

**Samant** : Tendulkar has portrayed Samant as an innocent, kind and gentle-hearted person in *Silence! The Court is in Session*. He highlights the cruelty and cunningness of the urban members of the theatre group by contrasting their behaviour with the simplicity and innocence of Samant. According to N.S.Dharan, Tendulkar uses Samant's utterances and actions as a powerful vehicle of satire against the hypocritical fellow-actors of Benare. Samant's total indifference to Benare's flirtatious manoeuvres highlights his complete innocence. In his enthusiasm to take part in the mock-trial, Samant reads some paragraphs of a novel while testifying against Benare. The description is similar to an incident in Benare's life and evokes a strong reaction from her leading to the confirmation of the doubts that her fellow-actors have about her. Thus Samant also unknowingly ends up hurting Benare's feelings.
King Vichitravirya: Tendulkar has sketched the character of King Vichitravirya in his play *Encounter in Umbugland* based on his observation of different national leaders as well as people belonging to the royalty. Vichitravirya is immensely popular with the masses. He makes them do physical exercises during public meetings. He prefers indigenous medicine over the allopathic. He displays a dictatorial attitude in his treatment of his ministers and keeps them completely under his control. He does not give enough time to his daughter, Vijaya. So she is unhappy with him. His untimely death makes Vijaya face the realities of life at an immature age.

Ministers in *Encounter in Umbugland*: Tendulkar has given interesting specimens of different types of politicians through his portrayal of the characters such as Aranyaketu, Bhagadanta, Karkashirsha, Pishtakeshi and Vrtyasom, the ministers of Queen Vijaya in *Encounter in Umbugland*. These ministers represent various parts of Umbugland. They are not at all concerned about the welfare of people. They use their positions in order to fulfil their own desires and have nothing to do with honesty and integrity. Each one of them desires to capture power after King Vichitravirya's death. They discuss the issue but fail to come to a unanimous decision. So they are forced to make a compromise. They decide to bring young and inexperienced princess Vijaya to power. They hope that Vijaya, being completely unaware of politics, will remain a titular head and they will exercise the power on her behalf. Their dream, however, does not materialise. Queen Vijaya soon develops into an astute politician herself. She begins to oppose the wishes of her ministers. The complete unagreement between ministers and Vijaya over the Kadamba community
upliftment plan leads to an encounter between them for political supremacy. The ministers decide to incite masses against the Queen. They plan to hire an infuriated mob and let it loose upon the Queen. Their wicked plan to get rid of Vijaya backfires upon them. Vijaya cleverly turns the sentiment of the mob against the ministers. The ministers save their lives by accepting their defeat to Queen Vijaya and submitting to her autocratic rule. Tendulkar exposes the hypocrisy and treachery of the selfish politicians through his depiction of the behaviour and thinking of these ministers.

**Pappa (Mr. Hari Pitale)**: Pappa, in Tendulkar’s play *The Vultures*, makes his first entry on the stage supporting himself on the banisters. He has a habit of working his toothless mouth. It suggests that he has become quite weak which is natural with the old age. The excesses that he has indulged in during his younger days may also be a reason behind it. His illegitimate son, Rajaninath, lives in the family garage. Pappa has never bothered to accept his responsibility. He had made the transition from working class to upper middle class by dint of his own hard work and cunning. His motto is to get what he wants by hook or crook. In the company of his brother, Sakharam, he had established a construction firm. He had no moral scruples in cheating his brother and driving him out of the house after capturing his share of business. This worldly-wise man, however, committed a mistake in his old age. He divided his property among his children in order to live a peaceful retired life. The decision boomeranged on him. His children treat him with scant respect. They even frighten and beat him in order to get whatever little money he has still got with him. Finally, he is driven out of the house. Pappa makes one last effort to capture his past glory. He seeks the help of Rajaninath, his illegitimate son, to recapture his property
from his children through the court of law. The plan fizzes out due to Rajaninath's refusal. Through the character of Pappa, Tendulkar seems to suggest that sometimes one has to pay for his sins in this life itself.

**Manik:** Tendulkar has portrayed the character of Manik in sharp contrast to that of Rama in his play *The Vultures*. She is selfish and assertive as against Rama who is sensitive and kind-hearted. She is a spinster in her early thirties. She is suffering from hysteria and lives in a constant fear that one of her family members may kill her at any moment. Such is her paranoia that she accuses her family members of trying to kill her by putting poison in her medicine while she was suffering from Typhoid sometime back.

Manik is fond of going to parties, smoking and drinking. She is a late riser. Umakant accuses her of having innumerable affairs, her latest lover being the Prince of Hondur, a rich old man. Thus Tendulkar has portrayed Manik as an unconventional, permissive and westernized type of woman. She becomes a victim of the cruelty of her brothers. Ramakant and Umakant maim her so that they can blackmail her rich lover. The lover dies an accidental death and her brothers don't get a single rupee. To complicate the matters, Manik is revealed to be pregnant. They take out their fury on the foetus inside Manik's womb. Ramakant kicks her in the belly and aborts her. Manik tries to avenge herself on Ramakant by conspiring to abort Rama, her sister-in-law. Thus Manik is no different in viciousness from her brothers. Manik, like Pappa, has to pay for her sins in this world itself.

**Umakant:** In Tendulkar's play *The Vultures*, Umakant stands for those people in society who prefer money to a man. Tendulkar describes his personality as flabby,
shapeless, and comic as well as repulsive at the same time. He is portrayed as an active and dominant man of the world who is not prepared to give an inch to his elder brother as far as the distribution of the ancestral property is concerned. He resembles Pappa and Ramakant in the tendency to grab, destroy and live off the dead. Whereas Pappa and Ramakant end up as complete failures, Umakant is able to hold his ground. Through his character, the playwright seems to suggest that some people in the modern materialistic society indulge in all sorts of crimes and still come out successful in the battle of life. However, Umakant is able to prosper only economically. Pappa says that Umakant is fond of gathering the little boys in the neighborhood and playing the "Gopi-Krishna" game with them. This seems to be an oblique reference to Umakant's unusual sexual preferences. When Ramakant is angry with him, he challenges Umakant "If you're a man, swell a woman's belly for a change!" (Act I, Scene II, 213). From such remarks of his elder brother and father, it appears that Umakant is impotent. Tendulkar has termed his voice as effeminate in the stage direction. Selfishness, greed, indecency, violence and wickedness are the characteristic features of his personality. The reason behind such behaviour, to some extent, lies in his inner grief because of his physical inadequacy. The awareness of his deficiency incites him to inflict miseries on others.

**Dawood:** The chief function of Dawood's character in Tendulkar's play *Sakharam Binder* is to be the confidant to whom Sakharam pours out his heart and expresses his views about men and matters candidly. He admires Lakshmi for her simple nature and behaves like an ideal brother-in-law towards her. He is unable to control his attraction towards Champa. The fascination of Champa's physical beauty proves to be too much
for him. By having an affair with Champa, Dawood becomes disloyal towards Sakharam, his close friend. As he does not appear on the stage after it, we don't know whether he feels guilty about having cheated his friend or not. Through the comments and observations of Dawood, Tendulkar brings out society's critical attitude and disapproval towards Sakharam's unconventional lifestyle.

**Fouzdar Shinde:** The playwright has given an interesting picture of a person suffering from the masochist tendency through his portrayal of Fouzdar Shinde, Champa's husband, in his play *Sakharam Binder*. Shinde is responsible for making Champa a gross, violent and aggressive woman. He had spotted Champa during a police raid on the liquor-shop of Champa's mother. He prevailed on Champa's mother to marry Champa to him in spite of her tender age. He tortured Champa by branding her, sticking needles into her and making her do awful things. Shinde's inhuman treatment to her resulted in Champa's becoming frigid. After some years there is complete turnaround in Shinde's relationship with Champa. Now Champa leaves him and goes to stay with Sakharam. When Shinde requests her to come back, she abuses and beats him to her heart's content. This happens many times. It appears as if Shinde enjoys getting beaten by her.

**Champa:** Like Sakharam, Champa is also a product of her circumstances in Tendulkar's play *Sakharam Binder*. The first thing that strikes about Champa when she appears on the stage first is her physical beauty and lovely appearance. Tendulkar has portrayed her as an unconventional woman who has no regards for societal norms. Champa’s mother used to sell liquor. Young Champa also used to accompany her. During a police raid, Fouzdar Shinde spotted her and forced her mother to marry
Champa to him. He inflicted inhuman physical and sexual tortures on Champa. Shailaja Wadikar rightly comments that Champa’s mother’s total disregard for her and her husband’s inhuman treatment to her make Champa coarse and violent. Champa takes pity on Lakshmi’s miserable condition and forces Sakharam to let her live in his house. A selfish motive is also hidden behind this outwardly kind action of Champa. She realises that Lakshmi will be of immense help for doing the tiresome household chores. Champa refuses to satisfy Sakharam’s lust initially because she is frigid. Threatened with eviction from the house, she manages to satisfy Sakharam after getting drunk. Gradually, her frigidity gets cured. On the other hand, Sakharam goes impotent because of Lakshmi’s presence in the house. Champa engages in an affair with Dawood to satisfy her bodily desires. This leads to her murder by Sakharam. Through Champa’s character, Tendulkar seems to suggest that even unconventional and rebellious women do not escape suffering in our male-dominated and exploitative society.

**Nana Fadnavis**: Tendulkar portrays the character of Nana Fadnavis in his play *Ghashiram Kotwal* as a prototype of the class of statesmen to which he belongs, i.e., the tyrannical ruler. It seems that Tendulkar’s portrayal of the historical figure of Nana does not conform to the views of the historians who have praised Nana as one of the best administrators and prudent politicians in the Maratha history. Tendulkar has projected Nana with his weaknesses only. No wonder, the play faced a lot of resistance as Tendulkar was charged of misrepresenting history. The matter was even referred to the Court of Law. The court issued an order requiring that before each performance a statement approved by the court had to be read. This statement
Tendulkar has portrayed Nana as a shrewd politician with a great sexual appetite. Though he has many wives, he is always in search of young girls to satisfy his inordinate lust. He comes across Gauri, Ghashiram’s daughter and desires her. He agrees to make Ghashiram the Kotwal of Poona to achieve his goal. He is a clever and cunning politician who tries to kill two birds with a single stone. In addition to possessing Gauri, he uses Ghashiram as a pawn in the game of power. By allowing Ghashiram to become a dictatorial Kotwal, he exercises a check on his enemies. Thus Nana uses his power and position to fulfil his own wishes. He has no concern with public welfare. After using Gauri to his heart’s content, he callously discards her. Gauri dies while trying to have an abortion. Ghashiram is furious and turns against Nana. But Nana succeeds in pacifying him by referring to his own powerful position and threatening Ghashiram’s expulsion from Kotwalship. Nana realises that Ghashiram may prove to be harmful to him in future. The death of some Brahmins by suffocation due to Ghashiram’s orders to imprison them gives Nana a chance to eliminate Ghashiram. He gives the angry mob of Poona Brahmins an order to kill Ghashiram and thus gets rid of his Kotwal. Neela Bhalla aptly comments that Nana is an ace manipulator who makes Ghashiram the fall guy. He is a study in cunning and lasciviousness and the way he outmanoeuvres Ghashiram testifies to his mental agility and cunning.⁴²

**Gauri:** The character of Gauri in Tendulkar’s play *Ghashiram Kotwal* is an apt example of characterisation through actions and gestures as she has only one very
short dialogue in the play. Ghashiram, Gauri’s father, decides to offer her to Nana in return of Poona’s Kotwalship. Gauri is not shown as taking any objection to her father’s ill treatment towards her. She follows her father’s instructions blindly and agrees to become the mistress of a man much older to her. Tendulkar seems to point out the sad condition of women in those times through Gauri’s character. Gauri meets a tragic end as she dies while trying to get an abortion.

**Sutradhar:** A Sutradhar is the presenter and conductor of a theatrical performance. Tendulkar has made a skilful use of the character of Sutradhar in his play *Ghashiram Kotwal*. He has assigned several functions to the Sutradhar. In addition to conducting the play, he also reports the incidents and comments on them. Tendulkar even allows the Sutradhar to become one of the characters now and then and take part in the proceedings of the play. Once the Sutradhar stops the Brahmins who are on their way to Bavannakhani, the red light area, and talks with them. Through his conversation with the Brahmins, Tendulkar brings out the hypocrisy of the Brahmins who are in the habit of visiting the houses of prostitutes on the sly. When Ghashiram is imprisoned on the false charge of committing a theft, the Sutradhar plays the role of one of the prisoners along with Ghashiram. His comments throw light on the corruption in the legal system.

**Pande:** Through the character of Pande in *A Friend's Story*, Tendulkar criticises the men who wish to possess a woman for pleasure but do not mind denouncing her if she does not concede to their will. Pande is Bapu's room partner. Unlike Bapu, he is a confident youth and approaches Mitra under the pretext of staging a play when Bapu refuses to introduce him to Mitra. Pande is shocked to know that Mitra is a lesbian.
He leaves the city to join the army. It is a little difficult to understand why Pande quits altogether when he could have easily found another girl for himself. When he comes back at the end of the play and comes to know about Mitra's having become a prostitute, he enjoys her pitiable condition. As his desire of possessing Mitra had not been successful, he probably bears a grudge against her and feels avenged by witnessing her plight.

**Manya Dalvi:** Through the character of Manya Dalvi in *A Friend's Story*, Tendulkar brings out how society oppresses an individual who violates its norms. Manya is introduced in the play as Nama's lover. He becomes Mitra's staunch enemy as she tries to snatch Nama from him. Actually Manya is a womanizer. He does not really love Nama. But Mitra's attempt to snatch Nama from him hurts his ego. He is a short-tempered man and beats Bapu on suspicion of writing anonymous letters to Nama’s family. He dominates Nama and makes her behave as per his wishes. He is successful in exposing Mitra's abnormality in front of the society and thus wrecks her life. He feels great pleasure to witness Mitra's plight.

**Kamala:** Through the eponymous character of his play *Kamala*, Tendulkar has shed light on the sad condition of ignorant and helpless women in our exploitative and male-dominated society. Kamala is exploited by Jaisingh, the male protagonist of the play, for the fulfillment of his journalistic ambition. Kamala is an ignorant and poor tribal woman who is bought in the flesh market by Jaisingh. She has no objection to it as she probably feels that it is the destiny of women like her. She accepts Jaisingh as her master whole-heartedly and is ready to do anything for him. She imagines that Jaisingh is going to keep her as his mistress. After noticing that Jaisingh has no
children from Sarita, she is ready to take that responsibility upon herself. She asks Sarita to look after the work of giving company to Jaisingh in society, whereas she will take care of producing heir for him. Kamala has absolutely no awareness of her use as an object by Jaisingh. Finally, Jaisingh sends her to an orphanage. Through Jaisingh’s exploitation of Kamala, Tendulkar exposes the self-centredness and insensibility of the modern careerist generation.

**Jain:** Through the character of Jain in his play *Kamala*, Tendulkar reveals the cut-throat competition that exists in the field of journalism. Jain is Jaisingh’s friend and colleague. But Jaisingh takes great care about keeping him in the dark about his expose of flesh-trade in the press conference. Jain seems to have enjoyed Kamala’s humiliation by other journalists during the press conference. This does not speak well of his character.

**Kamalabai:** Kamalabai is the maid-servant in Jaisingh’s house in Tendulkar’s play *Kamala*. It seems that Jaisingh makes her work very hard for a meagre salary. She expresses her desire of returning to her native place in front of Sarita. Kamalabai’s attitude towards Kamala suggests that she does not feel any sympathy for her plight and looks down upon her. It is an example of a woman’s insensitivity towards other woman.

**Arun:** Arun Athawale in Tendulkar’s play *Kanyadaan* has been portrayed as a mixture of different qualities. On one hand, he is a sensitive writer who is deeply conscious of his low class origins and atrocities committed on his ancestors by the upper class people for centuries. On the other hand, he inflicts inhuman physical and mental tortures on his wife Jyoti whom he considers as a representative of the enemy
class. By portraying Arun as a drunkard, wife-beater, manipulator and blackmailer, Tendulkar was sailing into troubled waters. He was invariably charged of misrepresenting the backward class people. According to Shanta Gokhale, Arun is merely a device that Tendulkar used to reveal the naiveté and mental confusion and its resultant defeat of his protagonist, Nath Devlalikar. The playwright had no intention of tarnishing the image of backward class people. Arun seems to have a phobia of rich people and their big houses. When he visits Jyoti’s house for the first time, he expresses his restlessness at finding himself in an upper class affluent atmosphere. The injustice done to the people of his class is always at the back of his mind. But it cannot justify his torture of Jyoti. He reaches the level of a beast when he kicks his pregnant wife in the stomach.

**Seva:** Through the character of Seva in his play *Kanyadaan*, Tendulkar exposes the gap between the words of politicians and social reformers and their actions. Seva, Jyoti’s mother, is actively engaged in politics. She is so busy in organising women’s rallies and other social activities that she barely has any time left for her children. She has been giving speeches about the eradication of casteism all her life. However, she does not like her daughter’s decision to marry a person belonging to the backward class. Though she is rattled by Jyoti’s decision, she is a seasoned politician and hides her inner unease. She starts finding various excuses to change Jyoti’s mind. Her objection to the marriage on the basis of the incompatibility of Jyoti and Arun’s culture and lifestyles proves to be correct as her daughter suffers untold miseries due to her inter-caste marriage.

**Jayaprakash:** Jayaprakash in Tendulkar’s play *Kanyadaan* has been portrayed as an
intelligent modern youth with a keen insight in society and politics. He is twenty
three years old and lives with his parents, Nath and Seva and his sister, Jyoti. He is
greatly concerned about the future of Jyoti. He opposes Jyoti’s decision to marry
Arun not because Arun belongs to the backward class but because he dislikes Arun’s
behaviour and attitude. He has serious doubts about his sister’s future with Arun and
they prove to be correct in the course of the play. It is Jayaprakash who opens Nath’s
eyes towards the fact that Arun, being a victim himself, enjoys victimising Jyoti. By
telling Nath about the newspaper report of the persecution of Palestinians at the hands
of the Jews who were once persecuted, Jayaprakash infers that “yesterday’s victim is
today’s victimizer”. (Act II, Scene II 547) Tendulkar himself believed in this theory
and voices it through Jayaprakash’s character.

Features of Tendulkar's Characterisation:

Various types of people from different stratas of society have been portrayed
by Tendulkar in his plays. Most of his characters belong to the urban middle class
society. Some of his characters are based on the people he knew or had heard about.
A study of Tendulkar's characters helps us to understand his vision of human life and
his deep compassion and respect for it. They reveal his keen power of observation.
Through his characters, Tendulkar makes a powerful statement on the vacuity of
contemporary Indian life and the loneliness that torments individuals in a rigid society
that insists on the strict following of its conventions and traditions and punishes those
who disobey its norms.

The cruel and vicious characters in Tendulkar's plays are representatives of
certain evil human tendencies and he satirises them. He brings out the dark side of
human nature through the beastly actions of these characters and creates an abhorrence for evil in the minds of his reader - audience. It is Tendulkar's indirect method of removing the social evils by exposing them. He expresses man's inhumanity to man and the fundamental evil inherent in human nature. We find doomed individuals struggling against a hostile society as well as the flaws in their own nature in his plays. Tendulkar ruthlessly dissects human nature and exposes its baser aspects such as lust, greed and violence.

There is an objectivity and impartiality in Tendulkar's portrayal of both the virtuous as well as the vicious characters. He displays compassion for the victims. He avoids sentimentality and pretence while showing an empathy and fellow-feeling for his characters. The tenderness in his depiction of the characters who are victims and the empathy he evokes for them suggest the essential humanistic approach of Tendulkar.

Tendulkar's characters cannot be divided into watertight compartments of good and bad human beings. Like real people, they are a mixture of good and bad qualities. There are shades of gray in the characters whom the playwright depicts as being virtuous. On the contrary, the vicious and wicked characters have certain saving graces about them. Thus Tendulkar seems to have adopted a realistic approach towards characterisation moving away from the practice of painting characters in bold black and white shades of the Marathi melodramas. It endows Tendulkar's characters with an unusual subtlety that transports them beyond the confines of time and space.

Tendulkar's characters such as Sakharam, Champa and Mitra are some of the most unconventional and controversial characters in the Marathi plays. Such bold and
unconventional characters had not hitherto been presented on the Marathi stage and jolted the tender sensibilities of the audience. Their language, beliefs and lifestyles set them apart from the conventional characters the reader-audiences were familiar with. Tendulkar was charged of having a flair for crude sensationalism due to it. However, Tendulkar was only portraying the varied aspects of human life as he found them through these characters. He refused to shut his eyes to the naked realities of the contemporary times. Through his characters, Tendulkar gave a visible form to things that are constantly happening in our lives and made the reader-audience confront the truth. He did not dress up the ugliness in life with any fancy trappings so as to make it glamorous but rather kept it raw and natural.

A study of the male and female protagonists in Tendulkar's plays reveals a consistent pattern of experience which embodies his view of human life. Each protagonist except Vijaya ends up as a victim unable to conquer the hostile societal forces. They become sad victims of the outward circumstances as well as the defects in their own nature. The plays culminate in the protagonist's realisation of his inability to fulfil his dream. Tendulkar's tragic sense of life comes out through it. He does not take a hopeful view of human life. He does not seem to have faith in man's power to change his destiny. There is no ray of hope for redemption in many of his characters. It is because Tendulkar cannot close his eyes to the reality and become optimistic in today's unbearable and directionless circumstances.

Tendulkar's protagonists such as Benare, Vijaya, Sakharam, Ghashiram, Mitra and Sarita, being unhappy with the circumstances of their lives, revolt against the customs and traditions of society. The protagonists such as Rama, Lakshmi and Jyoti,
however, do not revolt against the society. With the exception of Vijaya, all the other rebellious protagonists do not get success in their endeavour. Ghashiram is killed, Mitra commits suicide, whereas, Benare and Sakharam are crushed by the society and end up as defeated individuals. Sarita, however, has a ray of hope that she may become happy by asserting her individuality against her domination by her husband. Thus individuals are shown as losing their battle against societal forces in most cases in Tendulkar's plays. The meaninglessness of existence is indicated through the futile efforts of his characters to get happiness. In play after play, the playwright has effectively presented the essential loneliness of man. Tendulkar seems to believe that suffering is an inseparable part of the human condition. His belief that human beings are doomed to be unhappy and miserable whether they try to change their circumstances or not is reflected in the delineation of his characters.
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