CHAPTER V

PHYSICAL DEFORMITY:

HAYAVADANA, SAKHARAM BINDER AND EVAM INDRAJIT

... Your body bathed in a river, swam and danced in it. Shouldn't your head know what river it was, what swim? Your head too must submerge in that river - the flow must rumple your hair, run its tongue in your ears and press your head to its bosom. Until that's done, you'll continue to be incomplete.

- Hayavadana

Gender and social deformities invade the human body too and cause physical deformity. Gender and social hierarchies are translated psychosomatically in individual human beings. People accept the cultural attributes of their roles as men and women and as workers and intellectuals. Therefore the attributes determine their life styles to the extent that they are internalized. These life styles, like genes, shape their bodies and cause deformities within the biological boundaries. As Brahmins (intellectuals) are considered superior to Shudras (workers) in a society the brain (head) is considered superior to the body in an individual. Therefore, "Some people
even feel that their bodies are a lesser part of them, even that they are cursed by having a body" as rightly observed by Steiner.¹

Brahmins are mentally brilliant but physically weak as they spend most of their time in reading and writing. Shudras are mentally dull but physically strong as they spend most of their time in manual work. And women are physically weak and mentally dull as they, being confined to housework, are not allowed to exercise their mind and body very hard. Even among workers, those parts of their bodies that are used more in their occupation become stronger than other parts. For example, a cyclerickshaw driver gets strong legs while a blacksmith gets strong arms. Adept, strong right hands and inept, weak left hands are a striking evidence of physical deformity caused by cultural attributes all over the world.

Physical deformity reflects not only gender and social deformities but also political deformity. The head is more powerful than the body. So, within an individual, the head governs the body, whether the individual is a man or a woman and an intellectual or a worker. It is the head that carries the cultural attributes and thus it is the head that determines the life style of the individual. The head usually undermines the wisdom of the body and thus causes joylessness, drug addiction and illhealth.

Actually the body and the mind were once in an undifferentiated unity which we have lost in course of civilization. Most of the people do not even know that they can be unified. Gayelord Hauser says:

You know that mind and body are one, that mind and body and emotion are one. You know that the body can affect the mind just as the mind can affect the body. You will not treat yourself as two different persons.²
This is what William Blake describes as 'the undivided body-soul'. According to Norman O. Brown, a psychoanalyst, primitive human beings enjoyed perfect harmony between their mind and body; their mind felt their bodily experiences and their body rocked with the feelings of their mind. Brown calls this undifferentiated and unified body and mind the Dionysian ego. In the process of civilization, he argues, the mind and the body are divided, differentiated and alienated from each other. Because of the split and alienation between them, the experiences of the body do not reach the mind and the feelings of the mind do not spread through the body. Steiner attributes joylessness to this. Brown calls the differentiated and alienated mind and body the Apollonian ego. Hauser also perceives this evil effect of civilization: "That turn in civilization that has increased cerebral activity and decreased manual functions leaves the mind unhappy and the hand itching for something to do." The disharmony of the mind and the body reflects that of Brahmins and shudras.

The alienation and antagonism between the mind and the body inevitably leads to physical deformity, joylessness and ill health. People become addicted to alcohol, drugs and useless consumerism to escape from joylessness and to feel elated. Alcohol and drugs offer only a fleeting experience of elation but spoil health severely and augment the alienation. Steiner explains how joylessness is exploited:

Joylessness is unfortunately exploited by business interests. Drug use and consumerism are widely encouraged through the media and large number of people's lives depend upon the expenditures of a joyless population on drugs and essentially useless consumer items.

Sometimes the idealism, infused through education and the media into the mind of the people, serves the purpose of drug addiction. It provides them illusory pleasure of realizing their ideal but finally leads to their disillusionment.
and disappointment. The alienation of the mind and the body impairs our perception also. As Steiner observes, "Children's eidetic vision is turned into impoverished perception of grownups". He argues that people go for violence, sexual excess and drug abuse as they ignore the wisdom of their bodies. All these aspects of physical deformity find expression in Karnad's Hayavadana, Sircar's Evam Indrajit and Tendulkar's Sakthram Binder.

The theme of Hayavadana is the problem of physical deformity caused by the alienation of the mind (head) and the body. This is suggested by the reference to 'incompleteness' and 'completeness'. For instance, Kapila questions: "Why should one tolerate this made dance of incompleteness?" and the Bhagavata blesses Hayavadana: "May you become successful in your search for completeness." Even the play starts with the worship and then the description of Lord Ganesha, the elephant headed god, who symbolises physical deformity. This hints at the theme. The Bhagavata says:

... An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly - whichever way you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness. How indeed can one fathom the mystery that this very Vakratunda - Mahakaya, with his crooked face and distorted body, is the Lord of Success and Perfection? (1)

As the Bhagavata introduces the story and the characters of the main plot, Hayavadana, the eponymous character comes on to the stage. Like Ganesha, Hayavadana the horse-headed man, also suggests physical deformity. The Bhagavata mistakes his head for the mask and tries to pull it off with the help of an actor so he fails. Then he learns from Hayavadana that he is born with a horse head as his mother married a stallion, a cursed Gandharva. Hayavadana has been striving to become complete through
various religious penances and social service for several years. On the advice of the Bhagavata, he goes to Goddess Kali to seek her blessings.

The play proper begins now. Devadatha is a Brahmin. He reads and writes. He develops his mind and ignores his body. He writes excellent poetry and defeats several scholars in discussions. Kapila is a blacksmith. He plays games and participates in sports. He defeats many wrestlers in competitions. He has manual skills and is adept in making and mending carts and other things. He develops his body and neglects his mind. While describing their friendship, the Bhagavata says: 'One mind, one heart.' Devadatta is 'the mind' and Kapila is 'the heart'. Actually their friendship is based on the fact that they depend on each other for what each lacks. That is why Raykar points out: "They are thus complementary to each other." Since the mind is considered superior to the body in our society, the caste of Brahmins occupies the highest rung in the Hindu society which is hierarchized caste-wise. That is why Devadatta sits on a chair while Kapila squats on the floor. Their friendship is only superficial, not real, as real love is not possible between inequal people.

Devadatta is 'the mind' and Kapila, 'the body'. And both suffer from the alienation of the mind and the body. Devadatta easily perceives his feelings of love as his mind is nimble but he lacks the initiative as his body is passive. So he falls in love fifteen times in a period of two years. Yet he fails to marry any of the girls. Kapila cannot perceive his bodily sensations of love as his mind is not nimble but he has the initiative and arranges things easily as his body is agile. Devadatta knows this. So he seeks his help when even his sixteenth love affair seems to be a fiasco. He expresses his utter helplessness and hopelessness:
... I swear, Kapila, with you as my witness, if I ever get her as my wife, I'll sacrifice my two arms to the goddess Kali, I'll sacrifice my head to Lord Rudra ... (14)

Kapila easily arranges his marriage with Padmini. He takes Devadatta and his wife in a cart on a trip. Padmini appreciates his dexterity in driving the cart and later his strong handsome body. Devadatta feels agonized to see Padmini gaze at Kapila with love. So he goes to the temple of Kali and beheads himself when Padmini and Kapila visit the temple of Rudra. Later Kapila goes in search of Devadatta and finds him dead at the temple of Kali. He expresses his wish to follow his friend and beheads himself. Actually he becomes aware of the vague sensation of his infatuation and so an obscure fear of being blamed for the death of Devadatta and for his infatuation for Padmini seizes him. But he does not admit it. Kali uncovers the hypocrisy of the friends when she prevents Padmini from committing harakiri. She says: "They were lying to their last breaths" (33) She grants Padmini's wish to revive them. In her haste, Padmini transposes their heads. Devadatta and Kapila are revived with their heads transposed. 13

The person with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body is called Devadatta and the other person with Kapila's head and Devadatta's body is called Kapila in the play. Each claims Padmini as his wife.

KAPILA.... This is the hand that accepted at the wedding. This the body she's lived with all these months. And the child she's carrying is the seed of this body. (36-7)

DEVADATTA .... of all the human limbs the topmost - in position as well as in importance - is the head. I have Devadatta's head and it follows that I am Devadatta ... (37)

In this argument Padmini favours and supports Devadatta. Kapila then discloses her intention:
I know that you want, Padmini. Devadatta's clever head and Kapila's strong body (p.38.)

Finally, they seek the advice of a rishi (Saint). The rishi says that the person with Devadatta's head is the rightful husband of Padmini since the head is the supreme of all the parts of the body. Kapila feels utterly disappointed and dejected. Devadatta and Padmini return to Dharmapura, their hometown very happily and plunge into the joys of married life. Padmini does not understand the power of the head. So she also mistakens juxtaposition of the head and the body for their unification. So she feels elated to live with Devadatta's new body. She does not foresee that her joy is short lived. The Brahminical hypothesis that the head is the supreme organ in the body reflects the social hierarchy in which the caste of Brahmins is supreme in the society.

Devadatta goes to the gymnasium and participates in sports. He even defeats a wrestler who challenges the people to fight with him. Padmini is happy about his physical prowess but warns him not to outdo lest his acquisition of Kapila's body should be discovered. The two dolls that he brought from Ujjain for his son talk about his vigour.

DOLL II ... with his rough labourer's hands.
DOLL I. Palms like wood....
DOLL II. A grip like a vice ... (44)

Devadatta resumes his Brahminical life style and gradually loses the physical vigour of Kapila's body. Padmini asks him why he does not go out. He replies that he has to observe his duty as a Brahmin and then he adds:

It was fun the first few days because it was new. All that muscle and strength. But how long can one go on like that? I have the family tradition to maintain - the daily reading, writing and studies ... (46)
The Dolls also talk about this change of his body:

DOLL I. His palms! They were so rough, when he first brought us here. Like a labourer's. But now they are soft - sickly soft - like a young girl's.
DOLL II. I know, I've noticed something too.
DOLL I. What?
DOLL II. His stomach. It was so tight and muscular. Now .......
DOLL I. I know. It's loose ...
DOLL II. Do you think it'll swell up too? (47)

Similarly Kapila's head carries the attributes of a craftsman and athlete. So he does hard work and regains his physical vigour. Thus he gradually loses the softness and weakness of Devadatta's body. Padmini loses the softness and weakness of Devadatta's body. Padmini loses interest in Devadatta on account of his weak soft body with a pot belly. Her unconscious mind longs for Kapila. She sees Kapila vaguely in her dreams and the Dolls talk about it. She asks Devadatta to throw out the old dolls and bring new dolls for their son from Ujjain. Doll II says; 'Cover your wife before you start worrying about our rags'. When Devadatta leaves for Ujjain, Padmini takes her son and goes into the forest. She meets Kapila who realizes the power of the head. Unable to reconcile herself to this reality, she asks Kapila a tragic rhetorical question, "Must the head always win?" and he answers: "That's why I am Kapila now." (56) She knows that Devadatta became completely Devadatta because the head won. Actually, it is the victory of the cultural hegemony that has shaped the minds of Devadatta and Kapila. But Padmini still says:

Yes, you won Kapila. Devadatta won too. But I the better half of two bodies - I neither win nor lose. (57)

In fact, the names and the personalities of Devadatta and Kapila are the products of the culture which is based on the deformities. It is their bodies, representing life or Nature, that have lost the battle.
The conflict of the mind and the body is more acute in Kapila than in Devadatta. Devadatta, after discontinuing his physical exercise, often feels like going to the gymnasium. He gets bodily pains and decides not to do any physical exercise any more. Thus he overcomes the memories of Kapila's body. But Kapila really has a very hard task to overcome the erotic memories of Devadatta's body though he succeeds in making the body strong through physical exercises.

KAPILA ... one beats the body into shape, but one can't beat away the memories in it. Isn't that surprising? That the body should have its own ghosts - its own memories? Memories of touch - memories of a touch - memories of a body swaying in these arms, of a warm skin against this palm - memories which one cannot recognize, cannot understand, cannot even name because this head wasn't there when they happened .... (57-58)

He asks Padmini why she has come and why she has touched him. He then adds: "I have never touched you, but this body, this appendage laughed and flowered out in a festival of memories to which I'm an outcaste ..." (58) Padmini intuitively feels that the conflict is due to alienation. She chides him for his stupidity and says:

Your body bathed in a river, swam and danced in it. Shouldn't your head know what river it was, what swim? your head too must submerge in that river - the flow must rumple your hair, run its tongue in your ears and press your head to its bosom. Until that's done, you'll continue to be incomplete. (58)

She means that the reunification of the mind and the body is the only solution of their physical deformity and its ill effects.

Kapila asks Padmini to go to Devadatta but she requests him to allow her to stay there and look at him for a while. Later Devadatta comes and
asks Kapila whether he also loves Padmini. Kapila answers him affirmatively and suggests that they live like the Pandavas and Draupadi. As Padmini does not consent to this, they fight a duel and kill each other. Thus they end their 'mad dance of incompleteness'. Padmini still wants to achieve the unification of the mind and the body through her son. So she wants to provide her son both physical and mental training. She therefore relates her will to the Bhagavata:

My son is sleeping in the hut. Take him under your care. Give him to the hunters who live in the forests and tell them it's Kapila's son. They loved Kapila and will bring the child up. Let the child grow up in the forest with the rivers and the trees. When he's five taken him to the Revered Brahmā Vidyasagara of Dharmapura. Tell him it's Devadatta's son. (62)

Then she commits sati and thus ends her failure in unifying the mind and the body.

Padmini's son grows among the hunters in the forest for years according to her oral will and is then sent to the Bhagavata. The boy is as morose as Kapila in the forest. He does not play and does not laugh as a child should do. They try to make him laugh but fail. Meanwhile Hayavadana comes and he is a complete horse now. He says that Goddess Kali has granted his wish to be complete. What he regrets is the retention of human voice. He tries to break his human voice by singing various patriotic songs but in vain. Padmini's son sees Hayavadana, a horse speak and laugh. He sheds his gloom and starts laughing and then clapping his hands and the dolls fall out of his hands. Then he accepts the request of Hayavadana to sing a song and Hayavadana gives him a ride while he sings a song. The boy then asks him to laugh. As Hayavadana tries to laugh, his laughter ends up as a proper neigh and thus he loses his human voice. Hayavadana and
Padmini's son become complete as if they were freed from the spell by each other. Both are very happy and the boy enjoys riding the horse. Then the Bhagavata says:

So at long last Hayavadana has become complete. (To the Actors.)
you two go and tell the Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara of that his grandson is returning home in triumph, riding a big, white charger ...

(71)

The boy riding the horse symbolizes the reunification of man and Nature. Thus Padmini succeeds in achieving her goal posthumously.

Most of the critics, including M.K. Naik and Shubhangi S. Raykar, argue that it is humanly impossible to achieve perfection. Of course it is impossible to achieve perfection as long as physical deformity is sustained by cultural hegemony. A Jaganmohanachary rightly points out that Devadatta loses his physical vigour only because he discontinues the physical exercise in order to pursue his Brahminical tradition. But Raykar in her brilliant paper on Hayavadana argues that the unification of Apollo and Dionysus symbolized by Devadatta and Kapila respectively is not at all possible. Brown uses the words, Apollo and Dionysus, to represent alienation and unification respectively. Following the model of Brown, it can be concluded that the play deals with the three phases of human history and Karnad is successful in this as he cleverly exploits Indian myth and folk theatre (Yakshagana bayalata of Karnataka). Hayavadana and his mother who is cursed to become a mare by her husband stand for the first phase when primitive human beings like animals enjoyed Dionysian ego : the undifferentiated and unified body - mind. Hayavadana's father, a handsome stallion, becomes a celestial man, Gandharava. This symbolizes the process of human civilization when man attains Apollonian ego by losing Dionysian ego gradually. So Devadatta and Kapila who represent the modern man
suffer from the problems caused by their Apollonian egos. As they cannot get rid of their Apollonian egos, they end their lives. Veena Noble Dass observes: "In Devadatta Karnad does not show the superiority of the mind, rather he shows its limitations." These limitations are the result of the hegemony of Apollonian culture where the mind and the body become differentiated, alienated and antagonistic. Kapila and Devadatta are both victims of this and their predicament is that of the modern man. The third phase of human history emerges when the mind and the body are reunified in an undifferentiated unity. Padmini’s son will stand for the future man who will be able to achieve this. This concept of alienation and physical deformity easily answers the two riddles of the play: why does Hayavadana’s mother feel happy when her husband curses her to become a mare? And why does goddess Kali make Hayavadana a complete horse instead of a complete man? This is because animals have no alienation and no deformity.

Sakharam Binder is probably Tendulkar’s most intensely naturalistic play as Arundhati Banerjee puts it in her introduction to Five plays of Tendulkar. The play ignores the cultural norms and boldly presents the crude perversions caused by physical deformity. The three major characters, Sakharam, Lakshmi and Champa, are all abnormal and each is unique in his or her abnormality. Sakharam speaks vulgar language, drinks liquor, smokes and indulges in mechanical sex; Lakshmi is obstinately conventional and her religiosity amounts to unrealistic and inhuman fundamentalism; And Champa is as rebellious as Sakharam and does almost all the things that he does. They do whatever they do, in order to overcome the alienation and the joylessness that they suffer. Paradoxically, their actions effect the illusion of joy that sustains joylessness. And their discontent in life betrays this.
Sakharam is treated negatively by his own parents and the feelings of his tender heart are hurt deeply. He says to Lakshmi;

Born naked, I was. My mother used to say, the brat's shameless, 
He's Mahar born in a Brahmin home. And if I was, who's to blame? 
It wasn't my doing.

Then he tells her how his father made him run away from home.

Born in a Brahmin family, but I'm a Mahar, a dirty scavenger. I call that a bloody joke! I ran away from home when I was eleven. Got fed up with my father's beatings. Nothing I did ever seemed right. You'd think I was his enemy or something. The way he'd thrash me!

(127)

The cruel, prejudiced treatment of Sakharam by his parents has caused him to behave rebelliously in order to overcome his powerlessness and joylessness. Though he hates his father, he follows him in many ways. He is as hot-tempered as he. He lets himself be Brahminized a little by Lakshmi. He worships God regularly. Though he denounces the conventional marriage, husbands and wives, he not only behaves like any husband but also sympathizes with him. At one time he says to Lakshmi: "You get kicked by your husbands and you go and fall at their feet". (135) and at another he objects to Champa's illtreatment of her morbid husband:

What kind of a woman are you? Look, what you've done to him! He's your husband. Haven't you a heart? (167)

He laughs at the loyalty of women to their inhuman husbands yet he demands complete loyalty to him from his women.

... If it's a stranger, you'll have to cover your head and answer him. If I'm not at home, don't admit anyone. (156)

He strangles Champa when he learns that she is not loyal to him. Sakharam lives with only one woman at a time though on a contractual cohabitation. It
is as good as a formal marriage. He is not less cruel than his father. Lakshmi says to him:

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

He is able to be so cruel only because of his self-alienation, the split between his mind and body which must have been caused by the thrashing of his father. He internally feels powerless and joyless. He uses rough language; he smokes tobacco and opium; he drinks liquor and enjoys mechanical sex in order to overcome this. He forces Lakshmi to laugh to stimulate him sexually though she suffers from a severe burn on her foot. When Lakshmi leaves him, he brings Champa and forces her to give him sexual pleasure. He does not bother about the pain and the pleasure of his partner in this. All these activities provide him mythical joy and he feels complacent about himself and his life. Only Champa disturbs his complacency.

Lakshmi is deserted by her husband because she does not beget any children. So she seeks shelter under the roof of Sakharam. She is not a Brahmin; yet she observes Brahminical culture. She tries to overcome her powerlessness and joylessness in doing so. She proves to be obedient and loyal to her man; yet she bravely objects to his unbrahminical ways. Sakharam slaps her hard for not allowing Dawood, his friend to join the prayer to Lord Ganapati; yet she says:

What's wrong with what I said? How can a Muslim join in a prayer to Ganapati? (144)
Neither Sakharam nor Lakshmi compromises on this. And it results in her leaving him. This shows her fundamentalism. Sakharam proves to be more humane in this than Lakshmi. She talks to an ant, laughs and plays with it. But she fails to communicate with human beings properly. Sakharam demands her to laugh with him as spontaneously as she does with the ant. After leaving Sakharam, She goes to her nephew for shelter. He and his wife accuse her of stealing to get rid of her. As she has no alternative, she returns to Sakharam. But Sakharam beats her and urges her to get out. However Champa comes to her rescue and she is allowed live with them. So Lakshmi does the house work and worships her gods. She nurses Champa's husband and denounces her for illtreating him. She is disgusted to learn that Champa flirts with Dawood. She tells Sakharam about Champa's disloyalty. He strangles Champa to death and feels aghast at his own action. She advises him to bury her secretly in the house itself.

... Anyway she was a sinner. She'll go to hell. Not you. I've been a virtuous woman. My virtuous deeds will see both of us through. I'll stay with you. I'll look after you. I'll do what you say. And I'll die with my head on your lap. Yes. Now don't be afraid. We'll - we'll bury her. Where do you think? Not out there - no. Somewhere here. Inside. And we'll say that she went away. No one will suspect. I'll swear by God. He knows everything. He knows I am virtuous. He'll stand by me. He won't judge you. I'll tell him to count my good deeds as yours. I'll do everything for you .... (196-197)

Thus, she goes to any extent even inhumanly to effect what she believes to be right. She prefers tradition to human beings. So she accepts a husband however cruel he may be; but she detests Champa for her disloyalty though the latter rescues her from Sakaram. She also envies Champa for her sway over Sakaram. Above all she believes that the patriarchal tradition which has been in vogue for ages is right and sacred though it has caused immense
suffering to all the women since its emergence. Because of the alienation of the mind and the body she does not understand the inhuman and harmful nature of the tradition. As she observes it, she finds in it some power and joy which are merely mythical though her powerlessness and joylessness continue. Her unsympathetic persecution of Champa is, in a way, due to her self-alienation.

Champa is the antithesis of Lakshmi. She never bothers about the tradition. She is confident and courageous. Her mother sells liquor and tobacco. Fouzdar Shinde comes to the shop on a raid and sees Champa. He takes her away from her mother even before she becomes a woman. He tortures her by branding her, sticking needles into her and making her do awful things. So she is terribly frightened and runs away. He brings her back and puts chilly powder in her genitals. All this causes self-alienation in her too and makes her frigid. So she also detests sex because of the tortures that she has undergone at the hands of her fouzdar husband. As she grows bold, she leaves Shinde and joins Sakharam. She first resists his attempts to have sex with her. But later she yields to him as she sees no better alternative: "Face half a dozen animals every day! Easier to put up with this one" (181) But she drinks liquor before she goes to bed with him.

CHAMPA, you'll have you fun .... Wait. I'll give it to you. Keeps on drinking and making him drink. Laughs uncontrollably. Fun for anyone who comes along. A dog. A corpse even .... (171)

The compulsive sex of Sakharam exhausts her completely and she complains: "My head and body - just a bundle of pains and aches". (179) Later she says to Lakshmi: "But your Sakharam, he really takes his money's worth out of a woman". (181) She has little faith in religion and she tells Lakshmi the reality of life: "They don't come and live your hell for you - those gods and Brahmins". (180) Her language is as vulgar as
that of Sakharam who says: "In this house the woman must always speak with restraint. I won't put up with bad language". (158) Somehow Sakharam grows impotent after the arrival of Lakshmi. Now Champa objects to Sakharam's approach to her: "I didn't mind it as long as you were a man. I won't take you now?" (193) She likes Dawood, Sakharam's friend when he arrives. She expresses this repeatedly: "He is nice" (159-60) and evokes envy in Sakharam who says: "But in this house, I won't allow too much talking to strangers." (160) She appreciates the tea made by Dawood and the nice pan with tobacco brought by him. Finally, she enjoys sex with Dawood when Sakharam becomes impotent. She finds human love more in Dawood than in Sakharam. She is honest in what she does. Unlike Lakshmi, she prefers human goodness to inhuman tradition and unlike Sakharam, she breaks the tradition in order to be human and humane. But she cannot forgive her husband because he has torn her heart. (167) Shinde and Sakharam have tormented her. She takes tobacco and liquor to numb the sensations of pain in her body. Thus she also suffers from self alienation - the alienation of the mind and the body. However she does not suffer from powerlessness as Sakharam and Lakshmi do.

Veena Noble Dass applies the concepts of psychoanalysis to analyse *Sakhram Binder*. She observes: "It was in essence a protest against exorbitant demands of society, especially in the sexual sphere, on the life of the individual." (17) Renuka calls Sakharam 'a dehumanised brutal wretch.' (18) But, it is to be understood that he like any other character is a product of our dehumanizing culture. Tendulkar says:

Even in plays like *Sakhram Binder* and *Vultures*, the theme is not violence. Violence comes as a way of life - a natural way of life if you consider the background of the characters. It is there as part of the functioning of a character." (19)
The inhuman violence of the human characters in these plays is only the result of the physical deformity. Ramakant, Umakant and Manik drink liquor and resort to violence, in Tendulkar’s *Vultures*, to overcome their deep-rooted joylessness. Alienation corrupts and perverts all human values, as Marx puts it.

*Evam Indrajit* by Badal Sircar deals with a new aspect of physical deformity through the eponymous character. Amal, Vimal and Kamal form the background for this. They take the routine life for granted and try to overcome their joylessness by being busy doing the things that their civilized life demands. But, Indrajit, like the mythical character, the son of Ravana, who defeats Indra, the Hindu Zeus, is a rebel. He is conscious of and bored with routine, mundane life. He therefore cannot find any joy in it and wants to be different in order to overcome his joylessness. In his endeavour to be different, he goes round and finally reaches the point where he starts. So he realizes that he cannot escape from the routine. He admits that he is Nirmal, one of them but not Indrajit. At last he thinks; “Dying! That is the greatest happiness.”

As the play starts, Writer searches for a theme to write a play but finds none. Manasi advises him to write about four middle class people who come late. So he invites them onto the stage. He asks for their names. They are Amal, Vimal and Indrajit. Writer then describes them:

According to the census of 1961, the population of Calcutta is 2,92,12,891. Of them about two and a half per cent are graduates. They are known by different names. They are the middle-income groups, although within that group there is enough disparity of income. They are the intellectuals, although if they really relied on their intellect, they would die of starvation. They are educated minority, if a degree is indeed a mark of education. They are the elite, because they are...
well aware of their difference from the rest. They are Amal, Vimal, Kamal... And Indrajit. (5-6)

Auntie then asks him to have his meal. Manasi asks him whether he has written anything. He answers them in the negative. Then he regrets his ignorance of the toil and suffering of peasants and workers. It is thus shown that Writer is also one of them, the elite and the middle-income group.

The three acts of the play portray the three major phases of the lives of Amal, Vimal and Kamal. The first Act dramatizes their studies, examinations, hobbies, pastimes and other things that characterize their college life. They get jobs and marry in the second Act. They have various ambitions in their life and achieve them in the third: Amal gets a promotion as a manager in ABC Company; Vimal buys a plot and builds a house there; and Kamal starts business to earn more money. Indrajit loves Manasi, his first cousin on his mother's side and wants to marry her which is a taboo. And he wants to visit London and this visit, he believes, will liberate him from the banality of life. His awareness of the ennui of life which Amal, Vimal and Kamal lack makes him rebellious and restless. He says, in a proud manner, to Manasi:

If I hadn't tasted the fruit of knowledge I could have gone on living this paradise of your blessed society of rules. Now I can only batter my head against the wall. (23)

He changes his job from Calcutta to Bhopal. Then he gets a transferable job and goes to Bombay, Jallunder, Meerut and Udaypur. Manasi does not agree to marry him against the taboo and becomes a school teacher in Calcutta. She and he write letters to each other and meet once a year in Calcutta. He visits London but this does not change his life in any way. Then he marries another Manasi and leads marital life. He tells Manasi about his family:
My wife looks after the house. I work in the office. My wife goes to a film. I go with her. My wife goes to her parents’ house. I eat in a restaurant. She comes back. I go marketing. (54)

Thus he falls into the whirl pool of banal life that he has striven hard to shun. He realizes at last that he is not different from others. He talks about his disillusionment:

INDRAJIT... so long as I couldn’t accept my ordinariness I dreamt. Now I accept it.
MANASI. Indrajit...
INDRAJIT. No, Manasi, don’t call me Indrajit, please don’t. I am Nirmal. Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Nirmal. Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Nirmal... (58-59)

When he sees no sense in living, Writer enlightens him on existential philosophy:

Walk! Be on the road! For us there is only the road. We shall walk.
I know nothing to write about - still I shall have to write. You have nothing to say - still you will have to talk. Manasi has nothing to live for - she will have to live. For us there is only the road - so walk on. We are the cursed spirits of Sisyphus. We have to push the rock to the top - even if it just rolls down. (59)

It is the theme. The playwright thus conveys the philosophy of existentialism to the elite of the middle income group who feel too frustrated with banal life to live on.

K. Venkata Reddy, Veena Noble Dass and Eakambaram agree that *Evam Indrajit* is an absurd play. Eakambaram calls it an Indian Version of *Waiting for Godot*.²¹ He strongly feels that the play is not relevant to Indian context. He believes Indians do not suffer from alienation because, he argues, We may be poor and downtrodden, but the qualities of patience, endurance, hope, and peace which Hinduism and other religions embody
enable us to survive. But alienation is an indispensable part and process of civilization whatever the civilization may be. The higher castes of the Hinduism practise the inhuman convention of untouchability as alienation dehumanizes people. The physical deformity that people acquire through being civilized alienates people from the very source of life and makes them feel life meaningless. Indrajit's predicament arises out of his awareness which is alienated from his bodily wisdom. Writer also faces the same plight as Veena Noble Dass observes: "His agony is the agony of the artist who is deeply aware of the sterility and horror that is life."

Satyadev Dubey, commenting on the elite of India in general and those of Bengal in particular, points out:

The intellectually alive urban middle class regards itself as the backbone of the country. Their so-called middle class values have been glorified and yet their genuine and deeper values have always been attacked by fashionable Marxist dogmas. The middle classes have been made to feel guilty for opting for stability, aspiring for culture and believing in a national identity. In Bengal, the contradiction was resolved at a certain level with the middle classes aligning themselves with the left forces ... (Introduction, ii)

Sircar's There's No End is like his Evam Indrajit. The protagonist of the play, Sumanta, a Bengali young intellectual like Indrajit, faces the same problem. Sumanta is more progressive than Indrajit. He loves Manika when he is a student but he does not marry her. Then he discontinues his studies and plunges into the struggle organised by Communist Party. The railway strike of 1949 fails and he becomes disillusioned and leaves Communist Party. Then he resumes his studies and completes M.Sc. Instead of doing research in Chemistry, he joins as a Research Assistant in S.K. Industries and becomes a Junior Executive on promotion. He dislikes the duties of the
posts and loses the job by deliberately committing a mistake. He and Sumati become friends. Presently he is a writer of good reputation. One day he is arrested and taken to court. His mother, his lover, his leader of the Party, his professor and his employer accuse him of betraying them. Five more witnesses find fault with his not writing about the poor people, workers and the victims of communal riots and world wars. Sumanta's disillusionment with the Communist movement reflects that of Sircar himself though he favours the leftist: "The discovery that some respected leaders were liars and cheats who duped their followers led to disillusionment." The trial finally proves that every human being is a culprit. All human beings have brought about this crisis and all of them suffer in one way or another. Therefore they all can resolve it collectively.

SUMANTA. There is no accused. I am the accused. You.... you.... all of you are accused. We are all the accused.
THE MAN. We are all the accused.
THE JURY (together). We are all the accused.25

The play thus shows that we can overcome alienation only through unification characterized by collective awareness and endeavour.

Mohan Rakesh's short play, Perhaps, illustrates how physical deformity can lead to mental deformity. It is a dialogue between a man and his wife about the problems of their life. Like Indrajit they also feel bored with the banality of their routine life. The repetition deprives them of their joy. They feel dejected:

MAN. Don't you feel that the things we used to enjoy at one time ... no longer bring us happiness?
WOMAN. I've decided.
MAN. What?
WOMAN. That things will always remain the same and we'll have to
go on like this for years. (sobs)
MAN. Everything repeats itself. When we have already lived we shall
have to live again ...

They face the same predicament as Indrajit does. The man summarizes their
problems "... one can do what one likes but the emptiness within one still
remains..." (11) The mind has nothing meaningful once it is alienated from
the body. It feels empty and it may go mad. The man admits: "I don't get
upset.... I'm made to get upset." (10)

Division and hierarchization invade the human body. The mind and
the body are divided and the mind is considered superior to the body. The
mind carries the cultural deformity in itself and governs the body. It suppres-
ses the spontaneity of the body and causes physical deformity. This finds
a comprehensive elucidation in Karnad's Hayavadana. Devadatta, as a
Brahmin, has brilliant mind and weak body whereas Kapila, as a Shudra, has
strong body and dull mind. Padmini, Devadatta's wife, juxtaposes their
heads at the temple of Goddess Kali. So Devadatta gets Kapila's strong
body and Kapila gets Devadatta's weak body. But finally, the head wins -
Devadatta discontinues physical exercise and gets back his weak body while
Kapila toils in the forest and becomes strong again. The eponymous
character becomes a complete horse instead of a complete man as God Kali
grants his wish to be complete. Hayavadana's mother runs away happily
when his father curses her to become a mare. This shows that animals unlike
human beings are free from physical deformity caused by culture. The
alienation between the mind and the body, the major cause of physical
deformity, makes people joyless and their life meaningless as the bodily
sensations are suppressed and prevented from reaching the mind. So
people seek to get pleasure by consuming alcohol and drugs and by
indulging in mechanical sex and violence. In Tendulkar's Sakharam Binder,
the protagonist and Champa drink liquor and enjoy loveless sex whereas Lakshmi tries to drown her joylessness in religious rituals. In Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*, the eponymous character vainly strives to make his life meaningful and joyful by being different from common folk. In his another play, *There's No End*, the central character goes on changing his course of life for the same purpose.
REFERENCES

5. Steiner, 169.
7. Steiner, 168.
8. Steiner, 168.
9. Steiner, 168.
10. The story of Hayavadana resembles that of Hayahaya who is the son of Goddess Lakshmi, cursed by Lord Vishnu to become a mare because she gazes at the handsome stallion of Revata.
11. Girish Karnad, *Hayavadana* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1988) 40. (In subsequent references, only page numbers are given in parentheses.)
13. Karnad borrows this from Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads* which is a modified and elaborated version of the sixth story of Vetala panchavimsati.
17. Veena Noble Dass, 103.


23. Veena Noble Dass, 47.

