Chapter - I

Introduction
INTRODUCTION

In comparison to other literary genres of Indian English literature, drama is quite unpopular and less in number but the most powerful and dominating art of writing. Actually, the drama has been written in regional languages and later on either translated or transcreated into English for the sake of readers or audience of all over the country as well as abroad. It is considered that the feelings can be most honestly, vividly and powerfully expressed in the regional languages than English language.

No doubt, the 21st century is known for the proliferation of English language in India and abroad; some of the Indian playwrights wrote English drama but they were more read than staged. National School of Drama was established in 1960 with the intention of the encouragement and popularity of drama at national level through regional languages. Most of the powerful plays have been written by great writers like Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, Badal Sarkar in Bengali, Girish Karnad in Kannada and Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi Languages. Their plays have been translated into English for the purpose of their glorification of incitement in different parts of the world. The Sir, plays of Vijay Tendulkar have been staged by Indo-American Arts Council in October 2004 in its Tendulkar festival.

The most significant contribution of Indian drama is that they have gone back to Indian tradition—Myths, Puranas, Upanishads and epic poems for their themes and subjects. On the other hand they have applied modern theatrical codes and conducts- sound, light, music, pause, etc. Issues raised by such writers are very close to the contemporary Indian society based upon historical background of India. According to Veena Noble Das—
"They are the children of the new resurgence in their own areas and have established that by translating and performing the plays in other language areas than their own, they are marching towards the possibility of building our national theatre movement."¹

Indian dramaturgy has a glorious and very rich tradition started from Bharat Muni’s Natya Shastra to Anand Vardhan and Abhinav Gupta for its critical appraisal, standards and elements. Among playwrights we have Bhasa, Kalidas, Bhavabhuti, Shudraka, Vishakha dutta, Raj Shekher to Mahesh Dattani and Mahashweta Devi. Indian classical dramaturgy was more comprehensive and vibrant than Western classical criticism. In fact, what we call Meemansha is criticism for Western writers. -Aristotle deals with certain issues like mimesis, tragedy and epic on the basis of the works of Sophocles, Euripides, and Homer. Bharat Muni’s Natya Shastra touches different aspects of the drama such as production, direction and administration. He advises, ‘to the actor on the movement of eyes, neck and body posture to enhance effectiveness in acting.’² In Indian classical literature, drama is divided into ten forms but its two forms are very popular— Natak and Prakarana production, direction and administration. Natak, being heroic, took its origin from history and mythology, Prakarana deals with social themes, the fate and fortune of common men and women. In classical drama even the time of performance was fixed. The plays of virtuosity was performed in the morning, the plays of strength and valour in the afternoon, erotic plays in the first half of the night and plays of the pathos in the later part of the night. Apart from main characters we find Sutradhara, Nati, Yaugandharayan to communicate the audience and to amuse them. Other poeticians are Bhamas’s Kavyalankar, Dandin’s Kavyadarsh, Anandvardhan’s Dhvanyalok and Abhinav Gupta’s
Dhvanyalok Locan. They all were based upon Padini’s Ashtadhyayi. It is said that no tragedy was ever written in Indian classical drama as mentioned by Veen Noble Das. But tragedy does not mean death ending play but Gambheer Natak. In this respect Bhavbhuti’s Uttar Ram Charitam is a tragedy.

Indian Drama in English began with Michael Madhusudan Datta’s Is this Called Civilization? (1871) Later on Rabindra Nath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh wrote many English plays. These writers wrote English plays on western pattern although the subject of their plays have been borrowed from society, politics and religion of the then India. They wrote full length plays of five acts. Aurobindo’s, Vasavadutta, Rodogune, The Vizier of Bassora and Eric are plays written in Shakespearean pattern of blank verse. Like Shakespeare, he also covered the vast range of nation like India, Persia, Syria and Norway in his plays. In the same way K. N. Banergee’s The Persecuted is also written in different style from Indian classical drama, Kailasam’s Karna : The Brahmin’s Curse deals with Oedipus’ fatality. Hence pre-independent Indian English drama could not impress audience on account of their aping western pattern of drama.

Indian New Drama began in 1960s with the establishment of National School of Drama, Sangeet Natak Academy, Sahitya Academy, Bharat Bhgwan, Rangmahal, the National Film Development Corporation and other institutions which were established with the intention of providing facilities to the theatres, directors, writers, and actors for the promotion of drama at regional and nation level. Vijay Tendulkar rejects the role of such institutions and says in his interview with Gowri Ramnarayan—

"The National School Drama and Rangmandal are so entangled in their own problems that they have no energy, no resources to look around and see whom..."
they can help. Better that you belong to a theatre group and learn to do things for yourself."

Indian new drama got its inspiration from late 19th century western dramatist like Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy, on account of their social and realistic mode of writing. John Osborn and Walter Peter inspired them to become, ‘Angry Young Men’. And Burtolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett taught them the lesson of existentialism and epic theatre. Hence, globalization of Indian drama can be easily perceived and performed successfully on the stage.

However, the post independence Indian English drama was benefitted by the increasing interest of the foreign countries in Indian English literature in general and Indian English drama in particular. The climate slightly changed in the twenty first century. A good number of plays by Indian playwrights like Nissim Ezekiel, Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Guruchran Das, Mahesh Dattani and so on were successfully staged in England and U.S.A. But the plight of Indian English drama is that no regular school of Indian English drama was established in our country. This was mainly because of the encouragement received from several quarters.

The most prolific playwright of the post-independence period is Asif Currimbhoy who has written and published more than thirty plays. Some important plays are The Dumb Dancer, The Tourist Mecca (1959), The Restaurant (1965), An Experiment with Truth (1969), Inquilab (1970), The Refugee (1971), Sonar Bangla (1972), Angkor (1973) and The Dissident MLA (1974), Goa. The range and variety of the subject-matter are very powerful: history and contemporary politics, social and economic problem, the east-west encounter, psychological conflicts, religion, philosophy and art. K.R.S. Iyanger’s Indian Writing in English appreciates the creative caliber of Currimbhoy in his own critical framework: “Farce, comedy,
melodrama, tragedy, history, fantasy Currimbhoy handles them all with commendable ease.\textsuperscript{5}

Pratap Sharma wrote two prose plays \textit{A Touch of Brightness} (1968) \textit{and The Professor Has a Warcry} (1970). His plays were staged even abroad successfully but they failed to be staged in the country. Sex remains the prime theme of his plays, but Pratap Sharma shows 'a keen sense of situation and his dialogue is often effective'.\textsuperscript{6} Nissim Ezekiel's \textit{Three Plays} (1969) \textit{including Nalini: A Comedy, Marriage Poem A tragi-comedy and The Sleepwalkers An Indo-American Farce} are considerable to be a welcome addition to the dramaturgy of Indian English drama. \textit{Songs of Deprivation} (1969) is also a short play of Ezekiel. However, he is at best remembered for his poetic creation and not for his dramatic craftsmanship. These plays reflect a skilful use of ironical fantasy. Gurucharan's \textit{Larins Sahib} (1970), a historical play, deals with Henry Lawrence of the Punjab.

Girish Karnad, recipient of the Jnanpith Award, is a legend in the arena of contemporary Indian English drama. His journey from Yayati to \textit{Tipu Sultan} and \textit{Bali} holds a mirror to the very evolution of Indian theatre during nearly four decades. He represents a synthesis of cultures and the formal experiments which have been far more rigorously conceived and have certainly been far more successfully done than those of his contemporaries. 'The likes of Girish Karnad enable us to pretend that there is such a thing as a truly "Indian" theatre which can be true to its traditions and at the same time responsive to contemporary concerns.'\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Tughlaq, Hayavadan, Tale-Danda, Naga-Mandala The Dream of Tipu Sultan, and Bali} are some of his wonderful dramatic creations. In order to assess him in his entirety, it may be said that Karnad does not succeed fully in creating the conflict in the play with the requisite intensity, "but his technical experiment with an indigenous dramatic form here is a triumph which has opened us fresh lines of fruitful exploration for the Indian English Playwright."\textsuperscript{8}

Mahesh Dattani, the actor, director and theatrics personality, was born in Gurjrat, then settled in Bangalore so he spoke Gujrati to his parents, English to his sisters and Kannada to his friend. He castigates gender, class, race, sexuality in his plays. He wrote more than sixteen plays like *Seven Steps around the fire, Final solution, Tara, The Swami and His Son, Ek. Alag Mausam, Mango* is worth quoting. His important theatrical appliances are silence, pause, and thought (aside) voice over soliloquy. Some times he takes certain mythological allusions but they are used for their own interpretations.

Nonetheless, the trial and error method is going on to seek and search the roots of Indian English drama so that it might have a towering stature to show off to the world. In comparison to other literary genres Indian English
drama has achieved a little but in the changing perspective the realm is full of fruit bearing possibilities. In this connection it will not be an exaggeration to quote R.K. Dhawan who observes: “Very recently Indian English drama shot into prominence-younger writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan have infused new life into this branch of writing.”

Needless to say, Mahesh Dattani, a young man, is promising playwright stands out in a group of high prolific critics and writers. Acclaimed as a leading playwright in English, he has now bagged the Sahitya Akademi award for English literature for his play Final Solutions. Dattani puts drama on a very high pedestal. In an interview with Sachidananda Mohanty, Dattani argues: “Well, I think this is a wrong perception prevailing among the academics, especially the view that writing for the stage is inferior to writing a novel or writing poetry. I think it is important to keep in mind that the playwright is actually a craftsman. He is a “Wright” not Write” Significantly, Dattani does not write on conventional subjects. He exposes the mean, ugly and unhappy things of human life. Tan, is his recent play which is about a boy and a girl, Siamese twins. Here Dattani takes a medical liberty because Siamese twins are invariably of the same sex and they are surgically separated at birth. So it was important for their survival and the play deals with their emotional separation.

Manjula Padmanabhan is the next great voice in the recent Indian English drama. Her pioneering play Harvest bagged Oasis Award and got tremendous popularity throughout the world. She portrays a mean and moribund world where mothers sell their children for ‘the price of rice’. Harvest deals with a miserable family dwelling in a single room in a chawl of Mumbai. Population explosion is responsible for the increasing pauperization and dehumanization of the city people. Om Prakash’ a young man of twenty, driven by hunger and unemployment, makes up his mind to
become an organ donor and ultimately mortgages his body to a white First World buyer.

Like classical Indian Sanskrit drama we find many a trends in Marathi theatre which was born in Maharashtra in the eighteenth century with kirtania and Tamasha. Janak Ram Joshi, a well known figure for Tamasha was well versed with Sanskrit myth, Puranas and Kirtan. Later on Baji Rao II encouraged Mahars and Mangs (untouchables) to participate in Tamasha like Bhavayas of Rajasthan and Gujrat. Vishnudas Bhave’s *Sita Swayambar* was the landmark of Marathi drama. He wrote 50 plays including the subject of Ramayana and Mahabharata. His *Keechakavadha* is a national drama castigating Lord Curzon as Keechak and Lok Manya Tilak as Bheema. Mame Varckar wrote *Bhoomi Kanya Sita* based upon Gandhi’s philosophy of social reform of Indian women. Tamasha has been made alive by certain Marathi dramatists like P.L. Deshpande, Vasant Bapat, and Vijay Tendulkar.

Indian English drama, moreover, has registered a remarkable growth and maturity through English translation of Hindi, Marathi, Kanada and Bengali plays in the 1980s and 1990s. A study of Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Girish Kamad and Vijay Tendulkar amply reveals that they have added a new dimension to Indian drama through their substantial contributions. It is a matter of satisfaction that some of the Indian English plays have been and are being staged in the European countries. In our country, too, English plays are occasionally staged in metro-cities like Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai and Mumbai. The Yatrik group in Delhi has been doing a commendable service by staging plays in English. The British Council and the American Centre are giving a helping hand by arranging the visits of foreign troupes from time to time in big towns.

Plays written in various Indian languages are being translated into English and other languages as they are produced and appreciated in the
various parts of the country. A closer contact is being established between the theatre workers from different regions and languages through these translations.

Some of the playwrights like Girish Karnad transcreated his own plays from Kannada into English whereas most of the plays of Vijay Tendulkar have been translated by Priya Adarkar and others from Marathi into English. Thus regional drama in India is slowly paving a way for a “national theatre” into which all streams of theatrical art seem to converge. The major language theatres that are active all through the turbulent years of rejuvenation and consolidation are those of Hindi, Bengali, Kannada and Marathi. Not that there are less number of great dramatists in other areas, or less important dramatic activity in other languages, but these four have initiated in the fifties and sixties, a new experimental theatre which has cross-cultural manifestations. They also paved the way for the emergence of important writers in these four major languages.

Major Indian dramatists of New Drama are Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar who show clearly that they are the children of the new resurgence in their own areas and have established that by translating and performing the translated plays in other language areas than their own, they are marching towards the possibility of building a national theatre movement. Hence, study of these four representative writers becomes inevitable to students of culture in general and students of drama in particular, if they want to know how the contemporary Indian drama has made bold innovations and fruitful experiments which go in the history of Indian drama as a significant mark of achievement.

Mohan Rakesh was one of those rare literary personalities who never accept the traditional set up but always aspire to find and project something which is challenging and new. Rakesh’s language separates him from other
Hindi playwrights and puts him on a higher level of competence. His plays -
_Asadh Ka Ek Din_ (One Day in Ashadha), _Lehron Ke Rajhans_ (Great Swans of the Waves), _Adhe-adhure_ (Half-way House) - show that his dialogues have a smooth flow, a meaningful depth and an elemental naturalness suitable to his characters. They express the character’s mental conflict, frustration, dissatisfaction and the resulting anger in a unique manner. Though some of the dialogues between Mallika and Kalidasa in _One Day in Asadha_ tend to be longer than required and seem to be a little heavy on the audience, they are necessary to the play. As Kalidasa says in the play, “people think that living in that life and atmosphere I have written a great deal. But I know that while living there I wrote nothing. Whatever I wrote was a recollection of life here.” This lengthy dialogue is necessary for the reader to understand the feelings and moods of the characters. But Rakesh became conscious of this and made an effort to reduce the length of the dialogues in his other plays namely _The Great Swans of the Waves_ and _Half-way House_. Though in the former play, the dialogues between Nand and Sundari tend to become longer, in _Half-way House_ the playwright seems to be completely in control of the situation. Here the dialogues are short, suitable and to the point. They hit at the subject immediately. It cannot be denied that Rakesh contributed much to the enrichment of the language.

One aspect of his plays is that he pays much attention to the internal conflict in the minds of his characters. He has made an effort to come to grips with the problem of man-woman relationship. The irony and tragedy of this problem on different levels has been treated in his plays. _One Day in Ashadha, Great Swans of the Waves_ and _Half-way House_ run away from Sundari, Mallika and Savitri respectively. But do they succeed in doing so? Neglected by man and left alone are Mallika, Sundari and Savitri but are they able to face the new situation? These are the problems that Mohan Rakesh tackled in his plays. The depiction of the complexity of the human
heart, man’s helplessness and the chains of relationship attract audience and keep them enthralled.

Rakesh’s technique of taking support from historical themes and then throwing light on the realities of contemporary life is quite his own. He has his own style of saying what he wants to say. He himself has explained the dilemma of this problem by saying that to some people the word ‘contemporary’ has meaning only in terms of consciousness. But he really was not aware of having written anything that is not contemporary because history as such has fascinated him much for creative interpretation. Therefore, this technique would be understood only by those who knew that in the context of creative writing the meaning of the word ‘contemporary’ is not the same as in journalism.

It may however be argued as to why a writer should choose the historical or semi-historical background for interpreting contemporary life. To this Rakesh replies: “I know the force of this argument and can only say that I have no prejudice in the matter. I do mean to write plays with a contemporary background, but the point I wish to emphasize is that background itself is no criterion.”

While Rakesh used historical characters to project the breakdown of communication, Badal Sircar, the great Bengali playwright uses contemporary situations and social problems to project the life-in-death attitude of modern life. The central theme of many of his early plays is a sense of utter meaninglessness in our existence which leads to a state of metaphysical anguish.

This anguish is in fact closely embedded in the Bengali middle-class psyche, the tearing up of which was Sircar’s constant concern since his early theatre career. It is an irony that early Bengali drama of the mid-nineteenth century has strong social moorings, but could not lead the middle-class man
towards self-awareness. The drama of 1880s bears testimony to this attitude of the middle-classes towards social responsibility.

Sircar’s early plays *Evam Indrajit* (*And Indrajit*), *Baki Itihas* (*The Other Side of History*) and *Sheish Nei* (*There is No End*) are based on political, social and psychological problems. *And Indrajit* is about the residue of the middle class who have failed to adjust, align and cease to aspire among the intellectually alive urban middle-class.

Most of the plays like *And Indrajeet* and *There is no End* were written when he was abroad and there were chances to write more plays when he was away from India. A particularly prolific period in his playwriting career between 1966 and 1967 when he wrote six plays while working as a town-planner in Nigeria. Though these plays are not inconsequential, they are far from what Sircar believes is his central concern as a playwright, nothing less exciting than the responsibility of mankind for the events of our times.”

The hour of Hiroshima, in particular, obsessed Sircar in his two plays - *The other side of History* and *There is No End*.

The plays of Sircar have affinity with Mohan Rakesh in style and theme. The framework within which this act of synthesis is made possible is a strong sense of the frustration of the intellectual aspiration, the failure to get involved and the resultant feeling of guilt. The self-surging of the heroes might often provoke discomfort among the readers or the audience. But it is more the child of being forced to look at something asked, in which they often discover themselves than any strong feeling of embarrassment.

The plays after all the ruthless exposure of responsibility for guilt in personal and social relations end with feeble apologies for a continuation of the conventional mode of living. Perhaps Sircar wants to leave his heroes to suffer from the awareness of the responsibility. It seems to prefer a sort of self-flagellation to any positive action. A lifelong nagging reminder of guilt
can be the only consolation for the Indrajits, Sharadindus and sumantas, who are too sensitive and individualistic to choose any path of action to put an end to Hiroshima.

Along with Spartacus, Sircars later plays Micchil (Procession), Blioma and Basi Khabar (Stale News) are based on the concepts of Third Theatre. Procession is one of Sircar’s most intricately structured plays with innumerable transactions and juxtapositions. The relentless flow of events in the text is most skillfully concretized in the choreographic movement of the scenes. The actors are constantly on the move, walking, running, dancing and jogging through the room. The benches in the room are placed in such a way that the spectators feel that they are part of a maze. Sircar creates a most, bewildering environment with the bodies, backs, faces and profiles of the spectators. When the actors begin to move between and around the environment created by the spectators, the effect is startling. One can almost see a procession winding its way around the streets in Calcutta.

These plays of Sircar have placed him on a pedestal higher than other contemporary playwrights of Indian drama. His time of entry into Indian drama was very appropriate. Perhaps he made the final breakthrough when a considerable amount of modernity had already been ushered in and the new directors who responded so happily to him had already ‘achieved an identity.

In his first three plays the protagonists are all writers, searching for plots to write their stories. This is Sircar’s own search for plots to write his plays. But the characters in his later plays which were written after he formulated his Third Theatre are not individualized at all. They can be seen as what Sircar himself has said, I can be taken as a prototype of a particular class in a society at a particular period.”

The spectator assumes a
protagonist's role in the theatre of Sircar, making the theatrical incident experimental, in determinative and open-ended.

Unlike Badal Sircar who delved into the problems of the middle class man, Girish Karnad, the noted Kanada playwright, went back to myths and legends and made them a vehicle of a new vision. By using these myths, he tried to show the absurdity of life with all its elemental passions and conflicts and man's eternal struggle to achieve perfection.

Girish Karnad followed Bretchian epic theatre of German philosopher playwright, theorist and poet. Burtolt Brecht takes of "Verfremdung"- alienation effect in drama. Karnad’s Tughlaq is a commentary upon the solution of present time talking about Nehru era. His policies were wisely framed, poorly implemented and disastrously amended. In the plays of Karnad we also find the mixture of politics and religion. Karnad’s Nag Mandala has affinity with Shankar Shesh’s Ek Aur Dronacharya. The Play may be interpreted on feministic perspective in which Appana is like any woman whose chastity requires the trial of fire. She has been accepted as goddess but not as wife.

Karnad has won an all-India recognition with his plays Yayati, Tughlaq, Atte Ka Kukkut (The Dough Cock) and Hayavadan the and The Dream of Tipu Sultan, Bali etc.. He has been in the west and has been attracted by the drama of Giradoux, Anouilh, Camus Burtolt Brecht and Sartre in his search for new forms of drama. Yet he is essentially in the Karnad tradition. His reworking of myths, Puranic, historical and literary, relates him to Kailasam and Rangacharya as much as it does to, those European dramatists who remake their myths.

Karnad, in his plays, tries to evolve a symbolic form out of a tension between the archetypal and mythic experience and a living response to life and its values. Contemporaneity in Karnad’s plays manifests itself through
his operative sensibility in his attempt to give new meaning to the past from
the vantage point of the present.

Karnad does not take the myths in their entirety. He takes only’ parts
of them that are useful to him and the rest the supplements with his
imagination to make his plots clear. Thus in *Yayati* he has taken the myth
partially. The characters in Tughlaq particularly Barani, Najib, Aziz and the
stepmother are seen in a new context. In *Hayavadan* the discussion between
Devadutta and Kapila is at variance with the myth. Karnad has read
extensively Shakespeare, Brecht, Anouilh, Camus, Sartre and to a
considerable, Pinter, and is influenced by them.

Structurally the plays offer interesting studies. *Yayati* is the best in this
respect, which has mythical background of Mahabharat. Every character is
fully realized and has a clear solidity. This cannot be said of all the
characters in *Tughlaq*. Except for Tughlaq and Aziz there is hardly any
character that is growing. *Yayati* takes place between sunset and sunrise.
*Tughlaq* is in the epic scenes and takes place in a period of five years or
more. *Hayavadan* takes place in several years.

There is one drawback in Karnads characters. All of them are
intelligent. There is hardly any who is less than intelligent. Aziz and
Tughlaq appear as one. There is nothing that really makes them what they
are individually. Individuality is missing. This defect is seen in Devadutta
and Kapila also. They lack an individuality that is theatrically essential to
their characters holding sustained interest. We see them as chess pieces
moved to definite purposes by the playwright.

However, Karnad remains undoubtedly the most important dramatist
of the contemporary Kannada stage. He has given the Kannada Theatre a
richness that could probably be equated only with his talents as an actor-
director. He has could be taken to in order to recreate a contemporary
consciousness. Karnad’s advantages are many - his expert knowledge of contemporary European theatre, his exposure to the Western dramatic literature and more importantly his theatrical sensibility - all these certainly sharpened by his thorough knowledge of the stage. He has shown to the Indian theatre community and to the world theatre community how our past and present can coalesce to give to our present day existence meaning and to theatre activity a direction.

While Badal Sircar makes the society, specially the middle class, feel guilty for being indifferent towards man and his problems, Vijay Tendulkar, the avant-garde Marathi playwright, harps upon the theme of isolation of the individual and his confrontation with the hostile surroundings. Both these playwrights express their anguish at the prevailing social condition and the role man has to play in these conditions.

During pre- Independence period Dr. A.N. Bhalerao, Anand Kanekar, V.V. Shirvadkar started organizing annual festivals of Marathi drama. They were proud of imitating Western dramatists like Goldsmith, Galseworthy, Oscar Wilde, Shakespeare, Somerset maugham, and others. In mid fifties Vijay Tendulkar and his friends attacked upon Bhalerao and decided to give a new shape which is typical Indian all respects. Tendulkar became so popular at global level that his plays are staged in European countries like England, America, France and Canada successfully.

Vijay Tendulkar was born in a Brahmin family on 7 January 1928. He wrote his first play while still in school and later worked as an apprentice in a bookshop. He took up journalism and was an assistant editor of Marathi dailies like Navbharat, Maratha and Loksatta, Tendulkar, a prolific writer in Marathi, has to his credit twenty eight full length plays, twenty-four one-act plays, eleven children’s plays, and a novel. Many of his plays have been translated into major Indian languages, and English as well. His eight plays
which have been translated into English share- *Kamala, and Silence! The Court is in session*, translated by Priya Adarkar, *Sakhāram Binder* by Kumud Mehta and Shanta Gokhale, *The Vultures* and *Encounter in Umbugland* both translated by Priya Adarkar, *Ghashiram Kotwal* by Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliot, *A Fiend’s Story* and *Kanyadaan* by Gowry Ramnarayan. “*Silence The Court Is in Session*” won him a place among the leading Indian playwrights and “*Ghashiram Kotwal*” launched him into the global theatre firmament. He has won several national awards and fellowships like Maharashtra Stat Govt. Award in 1956, 1969, 1973 Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay award (1970), Sangeet Natak Akademi award (1971), Kalidas Samman award (1991), Padma Bhushan, the Vishnudas Bhave Memorial Award, and the Katha Chudamani Award Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar (1999) and for successfully raising social issues through his plays. He became Vice-chairman of the National school of drama in 1979 and drama festivals of his plays are organized in 2005. He is fighter for cultural freedom, the freedom that is stifled at present by various forces.

Tendulkar’s first major work that set him a part from previous generation Marathi playwrights was *Grihastha* (The House Holder) (1955), which a modern individual in an urbane, industrialized society. His dramatic genius was cut out for the newly emerging, experimental Marathi theatre of the time. His direct association with Rangayan at this point of his career and continuous interaction with such theatre personalities as Vijaya Mehta, Arvind and Sulabha Deshpande, Kamlakar Sarang, Madhav Vatve and Damoo Kenkre, provided new impetus for his creative faculties. Thus *Manus Navache Bet* was closely followed by a spate of plays *Madhlya Bhinti* (Middle Walls) (1958), *Chimmicha Ghar Hota Menacha* (The Wax House of Sparrow) (1958), *Mee Jinkao Mee Haralo* (I Won, I Lost) (1963), *Kavlanchi Shala* (School for Crows) (1963) *Sarga Sari* (Rain, O Rain) (1964) *Safar* (1942) which would chart the course of avante-garde Marathi
theatre during the next few years. There seems to be a consistency of theme and treatment in them despite the apparently disparate nature of their subjects. In all these early plays, Tendulkar is concerned with the middle class individual set against the backdrop of a hostile society. Another distinctive feature of these plays is the absence of an easy solution. Tendulkar presents modern man in all his complexities. He portrays life as it is from different angles, without trying to Moralize or philosophize in any way. Most of these works are endowed with his characteristic style of dialogue-jerky, half-finished, yet signifying ‘more than what it says. Another implicit quality of the treatment of his subjects in all these creations is an underlying sympathy for the ‘little big man’ in our modern world.

He has also translated Adhe-Adhure of Mohan Rakeh, Mark Doran’s Lincon Che Akheche Diwas, John Patrics’s Lobh Nasav Hi Vinanti, Karnad’s Tughlaq and Tennessee Williams’ Vasarach Akra (A Street Car) into Marathi language.

When Tendulkar started his dramatic career there were dramatists like B.V.Varerkar, P.K. Atre, M.G.Ranganeckar. Initially his predecessors inspired him but later on he broke the tradition and started in different ways. He was against stereotype dramatists and also the stagnation of Marathi tradition. In his plays he highlights the complexities of middle class society. Being the ‘angry young man’ of Marathi tradition he deals with man’s existentialism, loneliness, and favors socialistic humanism which focuses attention upon sensibility of middle class life like love, hatred, envy, revenge and so on.

Shantata! Court Chales Ahe (Silence! The Court is in session) was produced in 1967 whom Tendulkar became the centre of a general controversy. He had already acquired the epithet of ‘the angry young man’ of Marathi theatre, but now he was definitely marked out as a rebel against
the established values of a fundamentally orthodox society. The theatre
group in Silence, which comes to perform at a village, is a miniscule cross-
section of middle-class society, the members representative of its different
sub-strata. Their characters, dialogues, gestures and even mannerisms reflect
their petty, circumscribed existence fraught with frustrations and repressed
desires that find expression in their malicious and spiteful attitudes towards
their fellow beings. Leela Benare, the central character of the play, is the
only exception. Possession a natural lust for life and a spontaneous joie de
vivre, she ignores social] norms and dictates. Being different from the others,
she is easily isolated and made the victim of a cruel game, cunningly
planned by her co-actors. During the course of this so-called ‘game’, which
is meaningfully set in the form of a mock-trial, Miss Benare’s private life is
exposed and publicly dissected, revealing her illicit love affair with
Professor Damle, a married man with a family, which has resulted in her
pregnancy. Professor Damle is significantly absent at the trial, denoting his
total withdrawal of responsibility, either social or moral, for the whole
situation into which he has landed Miss Benare. During the trial, he is
summoned merely as a witness while Benare remains the prime accused as
the unwed mother of his illegitimate child. Interestingly, the accusation
brought against her at the beginning of the trial - that of infanticide - turns
into the verdict at the conclusion, principally because contemporary Indian
society, with its roots grounded firmly in reactionary ideas, cannot allow the
birth of a child out of wedlock. This very reversal in the attitude of the
‘authorities’ expresses the basic hypocrisy and double standards on which
our society is founded.

The violence that Tendulkar’s later plays would be associated with,
already makes itself felt in this play. In the persecution of this helpless
woman, a fierce psychological violence becomes evident. The latent sadism
of the characters, of Sukhatme, of Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar, of Ponkshe,
Karnik or even Rokde, surfaces during the process of the trial. In delineating these characters, Tendulkar has explored their psyches to the extent of revealing the hidden sense of failure pervading their lives - the inefficiency of Sukhatme as a lawyer, the childlessness of Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar, the non-fulfillment of Ponkshe’s dreams to become a scientist, the vain attempts to Kamik to be a successful actor and the inability of Rokde to attain an independent, adult existence. The dramatist to offset the complexities of the urbane characters adeptly handles the figure of the simple-hearted villager, Samant.

Leela Benare’s defiance against the onslaught of the upholders of social norms in a long soliloquy has become famous in the history of contemporary Marathi theatre. It is important to note here that Tendulkar leaves us in doubt as to whether or not beware at all delivers the soliloquy, thus suggesting that in all probability what she has to say for herself is swallowed up by the silence imposed upon her by the authorities. In fact, during the court proceedings, on several occasions, the judge’s cry of silence and the banging of the gavel drown her objections and protestations. Benare’s monologue is reminiscent of Nova’s declaration of independence but lacks the note of protest that characterizes the speech of Ibsen’s heroine. It is more a self-justification than an attack on society’s hypocrisies. It is poignant, sensitive and highlights the vulnerability of women in our society.

_Dambadwipcha Mukabala_ (Encounter in Unbugland), written and produced a year after Shantata, is a play of a completely different nature. Indeed, it falls in a separate class in comparison with all the other plays. It is essentially a political allegory but not bereft of human dimensions. It is not difficult to find reflections of the political situation in India of the late sixties and early seventies in the royalist regime of _Dambadwip_ (Ubugland). But the play is not merely topical; it unveils the essential nature of the game of politics as also the basic craving for power in human nature. The powerful
satire that Tendulkar builds, exposes the intricate political intrigues designed to attain positions of authority and the corruption involved in holding on to them. Despite the distancing achieved through the creation of a fictitious milieu, it is easy to identify the characters with political figures who held ministerial positions in those years - the ‘principled’ politician who spouts moral platitudes; his antitype, a bluntly immoral characters; the statesman whose face is stretched in a constant smile and who gesticulate wildly but at the same time is taciturn to a fault; the floor-cropper who pretends to be ill and sits on the fence tilt the eleventh hour. And of course, there is the indomitable Princess Vijaya, herself the daughter of the autocratic king, who turns the tables on her advisers and refuses to be their pawn. Tendulkar has portrayed this character with utmost care. 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 methods of vanquishing her enemies. There is an intensely human aspect to her nature, which is revealed in her highly complex but interesting relationship with Pranarayan, the eunuch. Prannarayan’s function in the plot is the same as that of a sattradhar or that of a chorus. It is he who introduces the play and acts as the neutral and patient commentator throughout the action. Yet he is not a mere observer or even commentator, but a philosopher as well. In the light of his natural wisdom, the reader-audient becomes aware of the ugliness and futility of the power game. It is through his eyes that the dramatist uncovers the central concern of the play All power corrupts.

In proportion to the large number of plays written in Marathi, the number of political plays is comparatively small, apart from the output of Dalit playwrights, Dambadwipcha Mukabala is one of Tendulkar’s first political plays. He would write others later, like Ghasiram Kotwal, which would give rise to such furor. But Mukabala has a unique freshness of
treatment, unlike other political satires, a kind of objective yet human outlook, that raises it above just another topical, political play.

*Gidhade* (The Vultures), chronologically the next play to be produced (1970) and published (1971) after *Mukabala*, was actually written fourteen years before. The entirely different nature of the work underlines the astonishing range of Tendulkar's dramatic genius. After the first production of this play, Girish Karnad wrote that the staging of Gidhade could be compared to the blasting of a bomb in an otherwise complacent market place. It was with the production and publication of Gidhade that Tendulkar's name became associated with sensationalism, sex and violence. There ensued a long war with the censors who condemned the play as obscene and in bad taste. The open display of illicit sexual relations and scenes of violence that constituted the plot stunned conservative sections of Maharashtrian society.

There is something more in Gidhade that sheer violence and evil. In the character of Rama, Ramakant's wife, Tendulkar is able to create a sensitive, naturally kind and good-hearted individual. She is like a helpless, submissive, tender little bird among the vultures. Her illicit relationship with her half-brother-in-law, Rajaninath, who is a bastard and an outcaste from the family, may raise a few conservative eyebrows and evoke questions of morality, but one has to admit that it is the single genuine and humane relationship in the context of the whole play. The sexual aspect of their association is merely an extension of their love, which is the only redeeming feature in the morbid and claustrophobic atmosphere of the family. Rajaninath, like Samant in Shantata and Prannayarayan in Mukabala, is an observer and also a commentator. He is a poet and he too, like Rama, has a sensitive personality. Tendulkar makes Rajaninath recite three poems, at the beginning and end of Act I and at the conclusion, which add a special dimension to the play. The innate compassion of the dramatist, who remains
an objective onlooker for a major part of the play, neither condemning nor judging either the characters or their actions, finds expression in the lines of these poems. His deep sympathy for the victims of human viciousness flows like an undercurrent throughout the play.

Tendulkar has said that *Gidhade* was born out of a personal crisis in his life, that it poured out of him within the short span of four days and he himself was shocked that he could give expression to so much violence. It was almost a cathartic process. Soon after writing Gidhade, he commented that he did not think that he could write such a play, wrought with violence and sex, again. But he did. Just sixteen months later he wrote Sakharam Binder. In the words of a critic, commenting on the play soon after it was produced: ‘For many decades no play has created such a sensation in the theatre world of Maharashtra as Vijay Tendulkar’s Marathi play ‘Sakharam Binder’. It evokes even more resistance from the censor boards than Gidhade had.

*Sakharam Binder* is probably Tendulkar’s most intensely naturalistic play. The play, as Tendulkar has stated in an interview, grew around the central character Sakharam, a book-binder, who though a Brahmin, is the antithesis of the general idealized conception of a member of that caste. Through the delineation of this character, Tendulkar explores the manifestation of physical lust and violence in a human being. What Tendulkar is able to achieve in his characterization, not only of Sakharam but also of Laxmi and Champa, is an almost total objectivity. All kinds of moralizing and judgment are avoided. Tendulkar seems keen to demonstrate the basic and essential complexity of human nature, which is neither black nor which, but varying shades of grey. Thus all his characters are a combination of good and evil, weakness and strength.
Tendulkar weaves a matrix of intricate interrelationships between his characters. Sakharam, who does not believe in the institution of marriage and arranged contractual cohabitation based on convenience with single women who have been deserted by their husband or have walked out on them, shows tendencies of being religious and domesticated when in contact with Laxmi. In his association with Champa he is transformed into a sensuous, lewd drunkard with thoughts only of sexual enjoyment. The presence of Laxmi and Champa at the same time has a strange effect on Sakharam as if the two different strands in his character come into direct confrontation, creating a psychological turmoil in him and resulting in his temporary impotence. Laxmi and Champa are also connected in an extremely complex relationship. When Laxmi returns, Champa does not visualize any possibility of competition from her for she is confident of her own sexual attraction & In fact, she pitys this homeless, shelterless woman. It is the kindness of this otherwise hard-hearted woman that makes it possible for Laxmi to stay in Sakharam’s house. Yet there is also a touch of contempt in Champa’s treatment of Laxmi - the contempt that a stronger person feels for a weakling. The two women between themselves satisfy the different needs of the male they share - one his domestic, the other his physical demands. Laxmi develops an asexual friendship with the other weakling in the play, Shinde, as mentioned earlier, while Champa has a sexual relationship with Daud Miyan. Though Laxmi finds nothing wrong with her own association with Shinde, her moral sense is outraged by Champa’s affair with Daud and she uses this opportunity to malign her rival. This brings out the latent hatred in Laxmi for Champa. Sakharam’s masculinity is doubly hurt through the knowledge of Champa’s physical association with Daud, since he himself can no longer satisfy her. Hence in his rage, he kills Champa.
There is in this play, a subtle underlying tone of sensitivity and tenderness towards humanity as a whole. One can discern, if one delves into the core of the play, the seeds of basic human values. In Sakharam’s playing of the midrange and the joy he finds in it, in Laxmi’s friendship with birds and insects, and Daud’s loyalty to his friend until he is lured by Champa’s attractions, in Champa’s generosity towards Laxmi - the kinder aspects of human nature and its inclination towards higher values are unfolded.

*Kamala* (1981), another play written in the naturalistic mode, came almost a decade after Sakharam. The intermediary period produced two other major works, *Baby* (1975), centering around the character of a simple-minded film extra who is exploited by those around her, and *Pahije Jatiche* (The Right Type) (1976), a semi-farcical play on the theme of casteism. Besides, in 1972, he wrote that controversial play, *Ghasiram Kotwal*, which with the perspective acquired during an interval of two decades, can definitely be considered a landmark in Indian Theatre. Totally novel and experimental in form, this play, set in a historical background, focuses on the power games that men engage in and the corruption, violence and sensuality in which they indulge in the process.

Though not a political play in any sense, *Kamala*, too, is a topical drama. At the centre of the play is a self seeking journalist, Jaisingh Jadav, who treats the woman he has purchased from the flesh-market as an object that can buy him a promotion in his job, a reputation in his professional life. He is one of those modern day individuals with a single-track mind, who pursue their goal unquestioningly. Jadav never stops to think what will happen to Kamala after this expose. Tendulkar makes a jibe at the modern concept of journalism, which stresses the sensational. But there is more to Kamala than this jibe at contemporary journalism. Once again, Tendulkar explores the position of women in contemporary Indian society. Through Santa, Jadav’s wife, who is in her own way as exploited as Karnala,
Tendulkar exposes the chauvinism intrinsic in the modern Indian male who believes himself to be liberal-minded. Like Kamala, Santa is also an object in Jadav's life, an object that provides physical enjoyment, social companionship and domestic comfort. Kamala's entry into the household reveals to Santa the selfish hypocrisy of her husband and the insignificance of her own existence. Yet, like most of Tendulkar's sympathetic women characters, she does not have the spirit to rebel against her present condition. Instead, she extends emotional support to Jadav when at the close of the play he is treacherously deprived of his job. But the dramatist also suggests that Santa cannot unlearn what she has come to realize and at the end of the play there is a faint hope of her attaining independence sometime in the future. Kamala and Santa are both built of the same material as Leela Benare in Shantata, Rama in Gidhade and Laxmi in Sak Haram. The other type of woman that Tendulkar portrays is more selfish and assertive Manik in Gidhade, Champa in Sakharan, and Vijaya in Mukabala.

Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal*, a musical historical, set in the Maharashtra of the late eighteenth century, is a dramatic expose of the altent violence, treachery, sexuality, and immorality that characterize contemporary politics. Ghashiram is a powerful dramatic statement of the violence that humans are capable of when actuated by envy, lust, revenge, and craze for power. It is a totally theatrical play set in an environment of intrigue, hypocrisy, greed and brutality-features inherent in today's power politics.

The play was first performed on 16 December 972 at the Bharat Natya Mandir, Pune, by the progressive Dramatic Association of Pune. In 1972-73 it won several awards at the Maharashtra State Drama Competition. However, the president of PDA banned the play after nineteen performances, citing three reasons, namely (a) it was anti-brahmin, (b) the character of Nana Phadnavis as conceived by the playwright was not
historically correct and (c) there was a fear of revolt in the audience, and a strong possibility that the play would be publicly abused by the audience if the performance continued, Protesting against the ban, most of the actors of PDA resigned and formed Theatre Academy on 27 March 1973. The production was revived on 11 January 1974, and has ever since been performed extensively both in India and abroad by the troupe.

In spite of its popular success all over India in the Marathi production by Theatre Academy - and in productions in other Indian languages, too - the controversy around the play has not really subsided. As happens so often with a work that questions contemporary values and phenomena from a radical position, Ghashiram has been attacked on peripheral counts rather than on its basic assumptions. Tendulkar has been criticized for showing Nana Phadnavis, a cult hero, in an unsavory light. But the play is not really about Nana, the late eighteenth-century Marathi Machiavelli who was the Peshwa’s Chancellor in Pune, the royal deputy’s deputy - but a deputy who ‘no longer owns his position so much to solid popular or military backing as to the diplomatic address with which he can play one party off against another.’ In an author’s note, Tendulkar says:

This is not a historical play. It is a story, in prose, verse, music and dance set in a historical era. Ghashiram are creations of socio-political forces which know no barriers of time and place. Although based on a historical legend, I have no intention of commentary on the morals, or lack of them, of the Peshwa, Nana Phadnavis or Ghashiram. The moral of this story, if there is any, may be looked for elsewhere.

Gender, indeed, is social and political destiny in all Tendulkar’s plays. Simone de Beauvoir once famously remarked that one is not born a woman but becomes one. Michale follows this idea to its logical conclusion when she points out that the meaning of gender in patriarchy is not just
“difference” but “division, oppression, iniquity, interiorized interiority for women.”¹⁸ and thus for all those without access to power. Tendulkar in Ghashiram Kotwal suggests that the social construction of gender, which is intrinsic to continuing patriarchal conflict between the self and the other, is effectively a useful tool in the hands of the powerful and will lead inevitably to the dehumanizing of both powerful and powerless alike, the Nanas and Ghashiram as much as the Gauris, and to the destruction of meaningful human relationships and social and moral values.

He is such a secular writer who has been deeply hurt on account of Gujarat massacre. In one of his interviews with Smruti Kappikar he says “If I had a gun, I would still put it to Madi’s head. He is a butcher. But every one has conveniently forgotten that ---some goes for Thackeray.”¹⁹

Two more plays of Vijay Tendulkar translated in English are Mitrachi Goshta (A Friend’s Story) (1982) and Kanyadaan (1983). Vijay Tendulkar was awarded the Saraswati Samman for the play Kanyadaan, a two-act five-scene play, is tightly written-with only seven characters.

Jyoti, the daughter of Nath Devalikar, and MLC who insists on democracy at home, has promised to many Arun Athavali, a Dalit youth. When she informs her parents, her father is ecstatic, but her mother Seva and brother Jayaprakash are unhappy, after they meet Arun and are shocked by his language and behaviour. Arun’s excuse for his attitude is the mistreatment meted out to his family and forefathers at the hands of society. Jyoti’s decision to marry Arun leads to a crisis which worsens after marriage as Arun proves to be a violent husband. Around them, the country too, is marching towards Emergency.

At the end, Jyoti is forced to come to terms with her fate as Arun’s wife, as she realizes that it is not possible to improve people and change society. Tendulkar has focused on a problem that there is no bridge between
the various sections of society, and that the attempt to overcome a taboo often leads to greater pitfalls than one can handle.

The latest play by Tendulkar translated into English by Gowri Ramnarayan is *A Friend’s Story (Mitrochi Goshta)*; Significantly, the play focuses on the unusual love affair of Mitra, a young woman, who is a homosexual. She is the central character in the play and becomes a lesbian neither by choice nor by circumstances but by the physical hormonal imbalance prompts her to venture in such a relationship. In spite of her physical attraction towards Nama, she is emotionally as well as socially more attached to Bapu, who tries to understand her. He always helps her and stands by her to support. The relationship between Bapu and Mitra is unique. Right from their first meeting, they strike a rapport.

Mitra has a stubborn nature and a desire to do what she wants to. As a result there arises a social conflict, which finally ends up with her rebellion. As a person as also a character Mitra is entirely different aid she tells Bapu the fact of her being different. She openly tells him about her attraction towards Nama. She begs him to help her meet Nama, and in spite of himself he lets her use his room for the meeting, she knows that she can rely on Bapu, and in spite of being cautioned by him, she won’t listen to him. He knows that behind her full-throated laughter and her ‘I don’t care’ attitude there is a great amount of restlessness. After Mitra’s attempted suicide, Bapu is also curious like the others, a fact that he cannot hide. She taunts him for being like the rest, yet she knows of his care and concern, and tells him the reason behind her suicide attempt.

Many of Tendulkar’s characters live in a cocoon and it is an amusing experience to see the characters slowly shed their layers and come out different and stronger. Creating on stage, for an actor, is a treat. It is a hallmark of Tendulkar’s plays.
Mitra and Bapu fight a lot. They don’t meet each other for days. They don’t talk for days. In the end Mitra comes to Bapu, and because of some difficulties asks for money. She does not tell him the reason. Bapu, without any reservations, gives the money. Names family sends her off to Calcutta to be married. Bapu tells Mitra about this, in spite of his promise to Nama, and in spite of knowing very well that she will go after Nama. As Mitra returns from Calcutta, they have a big fight over her trip to Calcutta and they break up ... But not totally. At the end of the play we see her torment between ‘Mitra’ and trying to behave like a ‘normal woman’. She cannot forget Bapu because Bapu was her ‘Mother’. She opened her heart to Bapu, which she had not even done with her own mother. Bapu is equally restless, and then one day he hears the news of her suicide.... successful this time.... and he is suddenly quiet ... what remain are silence and Bapu’s sobs!

Manya Dalvi is Nama’s boyfriend. One day when Nama and Mitra are together, he appears, curses and abuses Mitra, and takes Nama away. Mitra is angry and turns violent, not because he cursed her but because Nama quietly left with him. Feeling of helplessness, anger and frustration make her violent and she can do nothing but hurt herself by banging her head against the wall. Dalvi tries to expose Mitra through letters, and tells everybody about her rustication with sadistic pleasure. I feel, he represents society as a whole.

Nama’s involvement with Mitra is confusing. She is fond of Mitra, likes being with her, but the relationship is a burden for her. She finds it difficult to cope with it. But she cannot totally reject Mitra.

Looking at Mitra, one cannot make out her abnormality’. Boys at college find he attractive. Pande, who feels that he is in love with Mitra, leaves the city to join the army as soon as he comes to know through Bapu what Mitra’s preferences are
Mitra is from middle-class surroundings, with parents and family. When she realizes her 'abnormality', she is totally disturbed. She tries to fight her own battle, and Bapu is the main support for her. When Bapu too, doesn't understand her and feels that while going to Calcutta she has gone overboard, she is angry - at Bapu and at herself, and breaks away from him. For Mitra, it is not breaking away from herself - from her being 'Mitra'. She tries to be 'feminine' and cannot do it, and one day commits suicide - and succeeds!

All these characters in A Friend's Story create a great tragic experience. The playwright tries to understand Mitra through Bapu. As Bapu fails, so do we the end is inevitable!

Tendulkar's social concern and the acute awareness of his role as an individual and writer are manifested most conspicuously in the depiction of female characters in his plays. Many of them play a central role in the play concerned. N.S. Dharan has tried to represent a critique of a couple of his plays as geocentric plays,²⁰ but the fact remains that almost all his major plays evince his concern for women through the portrayal of their characters. He draws his women characters in different roles quite realistically.

As a matter of fact many of his female characters depart from the image of woman in traditional literature. While the majority of these characters are either rebels or untraditional in their outlook and behaviour, some are presented as the images of conventionally submissive, meek, and all too ready to embrace the traditional values dictated for women by the patriarchal establishment.

'In 'Silence! The Court is in Session', Leela Benare, a young woman is targeted by men, placed in a situation where she can neither get sympathy nor legitimacy for her child. It is a play about the regretful position in which
women are placed in a male dominated society. Mrs. Kashikar, another woman in the play is quite submissive and sticks to the traditional norms of patriarchal society. In a way she presents contrast to the protagonist, Benare.

Though Ghashiram Kotwal concentrates on its male protagonist Ghashiram, his daughter, Gauri and Brahmin women are sufferers in the worst sense of the term. They faithfully project a realistic picture of how women are subjected to an extremely miserable plight by power-mongers. This play apart from its central concern brings into focus the rottenness of a society, which recognizes only women's body as a vehicle for the gratification of male lust.

Another significant play, which exposes the human degradation - both male and female - is Vultures (Gidhade). In this play Tendulkar has presented two women characters - Rama and Manik. Both of them are complete contrast to each-other, while Manik is a free woman who scorns all the norms and restrictions and lives beyond them a lustful, vagabond and bohemian life, Rama typifies a traditional woman who suffers but cannot revolt.

In his portrayal of women Tendulkar does not take recourse to the masculine way of dealing with women's sexuality. This is evident in the two widely different women characters in the play Sakharam Binder. Laxmi and Champa are not the mere suffering puppets, they are rather dominant in their own way, and Sakharam swings from one to another. He undergoes a mental trauma and the conflict is created in his mind and in the end he becomes impotent and a murderer. In the characters of Laxmi and Champa Tendulkar has deviated from the traditional idea of an ideal woman and portrayed them as realistic characters of the contemporary society.

Kamala on the other hand is a topical and intensely sensational play, which depicts woman as a marketable commodity in India. The play opens
through the world of journalism in order to expose the social evil of women's slavery. The girl Kamla is bought and journalist Jaidev Singh Jadhav at his residence brings her. But Kamala opens the real life of Santa, Jaidev Singh's wife, who considers herself to be in the same situation.

Vijay is the lone female character in *Encounter in Umbugland*. In this play Tendulkar reveals the intrigues and intricacies of political power chiefly controlled by male society, which reacts and conspires against the ruler when it is a woman. The matrix of power and the way Vijaya sees through all the things and ultimately foils the conspiracy against her establish the phenomenon of women's role in politics and nation building. Her character raises the crucial issue of gender politics in the power game.

Again *Kanyadaan* concerns the issue of liberated women in the backdrop of a sensibly moderate and liberal family tradition where no discrimination is made on the basis of gender. The play focuses on the problem of inter-caste marriage and marginalized people like Dalits. But it is through Jyoti the main character that the play successfully conveys Tendulkar's social criticism.

In *A Friend's Story* Tendulkar introduces two women characters in a socially otherwise relationship. Mitra, a young woman is homosexually attached to another young woman, Nama who at last conforms to the prescriptive norms of traditional male society and marries Nanya Dalvi. This terribly upsets Mitra who finally commit suicide. Bapu, Mitra's friend acts as a mother to her whereas Dalvi tries to expose Mitra through her letters to Nama. Quite contrary to Bapu, a sympathizer with a woman without any selfish motive, Dalvi represents society particularly, male dominated, as a whole.

His most recent work is *The Last Days of Sardar Patel* that can be read as a play or novel in its dramatic and imaginative engagement on
account of the violence of modern India. It is awarded with Kalidas Samman in December 2006.

Vijay Tendulkar prefers complex characters, which makes ordinary readers to understand with great difficulty. In one of his interviews with Gowry Ramnarayan he mentions:

"My characters are much more complex than those of other playwrights or scriptwriters. This complexity becomes a problem as it makes them difficult to understand. But I cannot forget or leave out the inner contradictions when I develop a character. I am impartial in my acceptance of the good or the bad in them". He also prefers subjective opinions in the sense that one may be bad for the society but good for Tendulkar. He opines that his writing has always been honest. He has never tackled something he did not understand. Politics has nothing to do with him.
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