Chapter - III

The Vultures (Gidhade)

N.S. Dharan states in his article “The vultures “A Drama of Domestic Violence.”

“Translated by Priya Adarkar, “Gidhade”, a two – act play, stands apart from the other plays of Vijay Tendulkar in that it is a play which displays on the stage, the unmitigated violence arising from drunkenness, greed, and immorality. Furthermore, it is a play built on contrasting situations. On the one hand, there is a gruesome portrayal of man’s greed and on the other, there is a portrayal of tender love. When the agents of these opposing qualities meet, a conflict of great dramatic significance results. Tendulkar, in this play displays a rare genius, for mixing the absurd – as evident in the cruel and curious relationship obtaining in the relationship among Pappa, the father, his two sons Ramakant, and Umakant and Manik, his daughter, and the tender but possessive relationship between Rama, Ramakant’s wife, and Rajaninath, Pappa’s illegitimate son”

The Vultures (Gidhade) was actually written 14 years before it was produced (1970) and published (1971). It shocked the conservative
sections of Marathi people with its naturalistic displays of cupidity, sex and violence. 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. Conservative sections of Maharashtrian Society were stunned by the open display of illicit sexual relations and scenes of violence that constituted the plot.

As stated by Mr. A.P. Dani in “Comparative study of the Vultures and Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi”, Tendulkar’s Gidhade is based on the playwright’s perceptive observation of some cruel, crafty, unscrupulous and greedy men around him and even the names for some of the characters like Ramakant and Umakant in play have remained unchanged. Vijay Tendulkar is reported to have said that he wrote the play haunted by an intensely depressed mood, roused by the betrayal of the middle class world of rapacity. He conceived the play some time in the nineteen fifties. The manuscript was lying with him for long till he handed it in to Dr Shriram Lagoo, a legend now on the Marathi stage, in the early sixties.
Lagoo wanted to produce this unconventional play, as he was deeply impressed by the realistic presentation of the dark and diabolic aspect of man’s nature in the play. Both Tendulkar and Lagoo revised the play to suit the theatrical presentation. Lagoo accepted the challenge of presenting this play in the midst of all the adversities and tribulations. The Theatre Unit, Bombay produced it under Dr. Lagoo’s direction in May 1970. Dr. Lagoo believes that modern cultural profanity and aridity has resulted in man’s unbridled lust for power, money and passion, ruthlessly preying on the impotent rival’s spoils. In his fraudulent world, the fatal victimization of the single-minded characters like Rama and Rajaninath in the play is unavoidable.

The plot of the play is very concise. Papa Pitale and his brother Saktharam strive hard and establish a construction company named “The Hari Saktharam Company” and do a prosperous business. Later, Papa grabs all the power of the company leaving his brother in the lurch by deceitful design. Saktharam is reduced to poverty. Papa’s sons Ramakant and Umakant, who have already received their shares of the father’s wealth, want to squeeze him to his last penny and planning a murderous assault on him, drive him out. Then they violently quarrel among themselves, for money. Their sister Manik, who secretly collaborated in their plan against
Papa, has illicit relations with her paramour, the Raja of Hondur who impregnates her. Ramakant and Umakant now plot to blackmail the Raja to extract money from him. But they are frustrated to find that the Raja has succumbed to heart-attack. Now both of them abort the unborn baby by kicking the womb of Manik. Ramakant’s wife Rama, childless for long, gets conceived from Rajaninath, the illegitimate son of Papa Pitale. Now intensely disconcerted Manik, in frenzy, aborts Rama also. The horrid chain of violence devastates the whole family while Rajaninath, though knowing well that the wicked persons cannot be saved, Prays for mercy to them.

Today, thirty seven Years later, it is possible to judge the play with objectivity. The play is a ruthless dissection of human nature revealing its inherent tendencies to violence, avarice selfishness, sensuality and sheer wickedness. It is intensely morbid in the portrayal of its characters and actions. The decadence and degeneration of human individual belonging to a middle-class milieu is exposed through the interactions among the members of a family. Let us discuss the major issues presented by Tendulkar in detail.

1) Exposure of violence and Sex as a baser human instinct.

2) Love for Capitalistic Values V/s Relations and Love.
3) Women in Patriarchy.

4) Domestic Tragedy

(1) **Exposure of Violence and Sex as a baser human instinct:**

**M. Sarat Babu** in the introduction in his book “Vijay Tendulkar’s “Ghashiram Kotwal” writes “Transactional Analysis states that the biological basis of human behavior is stimulus hunger and structure hunger. These hungers urge a human being as well as any living organism to receive stimuli and respond to them. (This is called irritability in biology.) The stimulus hunger has become recognition hunger under the pressure of civilization. Strokes, the units of recognition, can gratify this hunger. They can be positive or negative and verbal or non-verbal. People feel depressed when they do not receive enough strokes. People cannot live without strokes since they have survival value. They, therefore, prefer negative strokes to no strokes. The society uses strokes to control the behaviour of the people as they are more powerful than any weapon. And when people are not given strokes in a normal and natural way owing to cultural restraints and taboos, they resort to morbid and
perverted means of getting strokes. The exchange of strokes invariably involves some kind of violence or the other. Tendulkar, therefore discovers the inevitability of violence through his experience of the psycho-social reality and says:

“Unlike communists, I don’t think that violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or, for that matter, in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that the human being is born with. Not that it’s bad. Without violence, man would have turned into a vegetable.”


Positive strokes offer pleasurable violence that Freud would consider libidinal. Negative strokes involve painful violence, which Freud would attribute to aggressive impulses. And violence can be verbal or non-verbal (Physical) as strokes can be verbal or non-verbal. Socio-cultural norms discourage the free and spontaneous exchange of positive strokes (Love). And self-alienation worsens the situation. It makes people joyless and they seek this joy through the morbid stimulation for liquor, drugs, mechanical sex and violence. In a hierarchized society, everybody, strives to scramble up the ladder. In doing so, they become loveless and resort to any means to reach a higher rung. This also augments violence in a society. Violence finds a good illustration in every
play of Tendulkar. Silence! The court is in session illustrates verbal violence while other plays such as “The Vultures” and “Sakharam Binder” exemplify both verbal and non-verbal violence.”

“The Vultures” is about the inhuman violence due to self alienation as well as due to selfishness and avarice. He wrote this play with the conviction that the vulturine instinct in man is deeply rooted. He attempted to explore the meaning of man’s life victimized by selfishness, hatred, jealousy and cupidity. The vulturine nature dominating the relations of such middle-class family members is the leitmotif of the play. The violent melodramatic presentation with the abusive and obscene expressions of the schizophrenic characters outwitting and torturing the another permeates the lurid atmosphere of the play.

About the violence in the play Tendulkar himself admitted in the Hindu Folio of Feb, 98. The dialogue is between Ms. Gowri narayanan and Vijay Tendulkar.

Gowri : “…it seems Gidhade was Terribly overwritten and Dr. Shriram Lagoo edited it ruthlessly for the production.
Tendulkar: “That’s right. It was one of my earlier plays. Dr. Lagoo found it had a tremendous impact even the way it was. But that kind of violence cannot be taken by an audience for three hours. I agreed with his cuts, didn’t dispute them at all.

So he admits to the fact that it is sheer violence that characterize the play. The Title “Ghidhade” (“Vultures”) itself is indicative of the unpleasant subject matter of the play. The ferocity, ruthlessness, avarice and cunningness of the vulture is inherent in all the members of Pappa’s family.

The play opens with the long song of Rajaninath, the illegitimated son of Pappa Pitale, which narrates the history of twenty-two years of the house and the family members. He concludes the song

Five vultures.

On the swinging branch……

Of her rotted hopes….

Five ……..Vultures ………
And the real introduction of these five Vultures is given in Scene II, of Act I. the two brothers Ramakant and Umakant are introduced as they kick out and beat the old gardener Jagannath, who is asking for money, as he has not been paid. They call him “Ungrateful bastard!” The introduction of their sister Manik also shocks the readers. It is morning and she drinks wine. She sleeps late, smokes and drinks and hops from one bed to another. The father Hari Pitale cheats his own brother Sakharam in business and prospers. They all form a family of Vultures. Ramakant, Umakant and Manik, like their father, are ever ready to cheat one another to get a great share of the property. They do not trust one another. Manik feels insecure in the house and says “Ha! So I should leave it open, should I? so you can come and strangle me, all of you? It’s because I take care that I’ve survived in this house?”

She further says “But who wants a sister round here? Since the division, your husband even charges me board and lodging! I suppose I’m lucky he doesn’t flourish a knife at me. And get away with my share at night. She, later gives an instance to support her fear, “when I had typhoid last year, far from looking after me, you’d all plotted to put poison in medicine!”
The brothers want to get rid of their sister Manik. It becomes clear in scene I of Act Two. At a game of cards, Umakant is about to choke Manik to death, but Ramakant says

“Don’t bloody let her go, Umya, Drag the bloody money out. Look how she’s wriggling : Squash her bloody neck: Twist it.

This dialogue presents the violent nature of Ramakant. Manik’s latest love affair is with the Raja of Hondur and the brothers think that he might marry her.” If her belly swells out –“they decide to blackmail the Raja of Hondur. Ramakant says –

“Hear me. She’s pregnant. If you want her fixed, put down the money. Cash down. Twenty thousand. What? More, of you like. Otherwise, bloody publicity! Uproar in the bloody newspapers.

To prevent her from informing the Raja of their plan, they break her leg. They ruthlessly execute this plan. But a phone call inform them that the Raja of Hondur has died of heart attack. As a result, their plan of blackmailing Raja of Hondur go in vain. They feel frustrated and do not know how to take it on. Umakant suggests that they kick on her belly hard and cause abortion. He says –
“Let’s knock him out! The Raja in little Manik’s belly! One kick that’s enough!

And Ramakant gets pleased with the idea and says –

“An idea, dammit! Let’s abort him! Let’s knock him bloody out! Let’s kick him out. A bastard breed, damm it – come on brother. Come! Let’s finish off the Raja’s bloody offspring.”

And they kick her unborn child out of her. She starts bleeding. She, with broken leg, writhes in severe pain. This scene is regarded as one of the goriest, most heinous scenes ever conceived on the Marathi stage, albeit as an off stage, event. All we hear of it is Manik’s scream. Then another, And then she comes hobbling down the steps, one leg in plaster, her Sari covered in the blood of the unborn, barely able to hold herself together. She runs out of the house and down the passage at the back, fearing for her own life. At the end, of the passage stands, her father’s laughing at her fate.

“This unconventional scenes on the Marathi stage, it is said, could have been avoided to comply with the Indian cultural norms in artistic revelations. Nevertheless, Tendulkar being an experimental dramatist
appears to stress the inevitability of these presentations in consonance with the shocking artefact of the dramatic experience, as he was endeavouring to manifest the unspiritual arid, desolate sensitivities steaming from the pervasive alienation of devastated and devastating middle class man”

Another scene of violence is the occasion when both the brothers threaten their uncle Sakharam. Once, Sakharam suddenly comes and it surprises them. The father Hari Pitale cheated him in the business and seeing him in the house Umakant asks his brother. How’d Uncle….get here, Ramya? Papa. Papa, cut his – er – throat! Turned’m out of house. Fifteen years ago.

Ramakant says “Poor Uncle! They are both equal bloody swindlers, brother, Papa’n Uncle!

Both the brothers drag his body down to the floor. In the morning of the following day, Ramakant frightens his uncle out and he runs out for life. Hari Pitale praises his son for it. Both the brothers have heard Sakharam demanding money from Pappa. This rouse their suspicion that their father still has some money stacked away somewhere. So, after, driving away
Sakharam, Ramakant, Umakant and Manik make their Pappa drink to reveal the truth about the money. As Mr. N.S.Dharan says,

“IT is a scene of unbelievable violence – violence that children are capable of inflicting on their father.”

Ramakant and Umakant hurt their father, a fake fight between themselves for fun and Manik pretends trying to save him. They torture him.

Ramakant says –

“Which bank? In which bank, Pappa? Speak up. Or this bloody Umya here may murder you for nothing …….. The bloody bastard! Tell me, In which bank is the money Pappa?”

In this fake fight, Pappa gets injured and in order to escape from further assault, he admits to them that he has deposited some money in the Punjab Bank. He says pathetically:

“There’s no more, you devils! There isn’t ! that’s all there is, really. Please don’t kill me ! I’m your father, you pimps ! your father!”
Pappa, cannot withstand the panic that they create and gives them a cheque. The scene ends with the harsh screeching of vultures to suggest their predatory nature. Not only liquor but also violence thrills them. The violent action is further presented on the stage when Manik succeeds in aborting Rama. Rama, the sister-in-law, who is childless, longing for a child, is now bereft of hope.

**According to M. Sarat babu**

“The play exemplifies two kinds of violence through two major characters Rajaninath and Ramakant. The former fructifies the womb of Rama while the latter aborts it. It seems that these human vultures get as much intoxicated through resorting to violence as through drinking liquor. Though the writer tries to project violence in its variegated forms, he also depicts the loveless and joyless situation of the society caused by individualism and competition in this society of inequality. The play shows how people become loveless and inhuman in their mad scramble to the higher rungs in this economically hierarchized society. They also become joyless with anxiety. So they try to secure joy through liquor and violence. But it worsens the situation.”
The whole play exhibits the baser instincts of human – violence. The beating up of the father by his own children, the two brothers’ forcible abortion of their sister’s child, the mutual hatred among the members of the family, underline the fundamental evil inherent in human character. The relation between Hari Pitale, the father and three sons and the exhibition of violence in their relation justifies *Freud’s theory of Primal father-son conflict* as given in his famous book “*Totem and Taboo.*”

According to Freud, father-son hostility is one of the basic facts, of primitive life. The primitive hordes were governed by the patriarch or the primal father who enjoyed intimate relations with the female in the horde. As his sons grew up, they were jealous of their father. They wanted to possess what he possessed and also to enjoy the rights and privileges enjoyed by him. With age the sons became hostile to their father who in his turn, tried to banish them form the horde. Ultimately, the sons killed the father. This primal father-son conflict is enacted unconsciously by every generation: father-son conflict is ingrained in the human psyche. It is a universal phenomenon. This primal father-son conflict is represented in “*The Vultures*”, in the hostility of the three sons – Umakant, Ramakant and Rajaninath towards their father Hari Pilate, who is prototype of the primal father. He is patriarch ruling his household and
enjoying extra-marital relation, sex-relation with another woman. But as he advances in age his sons grow up and hate him, feel jealous of him and want to possess everything that he possesses. The hostility of the growing sons against patriarch is seen in the open revolt of the three sons and their ill-treatment of aged Hari Pilate.

Apart from violence, the play is also criticized for the display of sex. The play presents the gross sensuality of Manik- the sister. She represents the concepts of modern woman devoid of any morality. She goes to the parties, sleeps late, smokes and drinks as soon as she gets up. Immorality characterizes her character as she hops from one bed to another. The brothers hate her due to her immoral nature. They are not ready to label her as a “woman”. The following dialogue reveals her passionate nature.

Umakant  : “You -------- a woman?
Ramakant : What is the evidence?
Manik    : You bastards! You’ve no shame!
Umakant  : we don’t go for picnics with anyone…..
Ramakant : or stay the night with them, either!
Umakant  : Nor do we keep those pills in our purse.
Her latest affair is with the Raja of Hondur and she becomes pregnant. Like Miss Benare of “Silence! The court is in session” she becomes pregnant without marriage. Her baby, like Benare’s, is illegitimate, but it is the result of passion.

The character of Rama is glorified by many as a timid sparrow among five vultures. But she also develops illicit relations with her brother-in-law Rajaninath and conceives child. No doubt, she is childless and craves for motherhood but this craving leads her to immoral way. Her husband Ramakant becomes impotent due to excessive drinking and takes her to several doctors and saints. She is disgusted with her husband’s drunken love-making and she declares to Rajaninath her intention of immolating herself. Rajaninath, sensitive to Rama’s yearning to become a mother holds her in an embrace and she yields to him. About them Arundhati Banerjee aptly says –

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.
Though Rama’s desire for the body of the outcast half-brother of her husband and her illicit relationship may raise a few conservative eyebrows and evoke questions of morality.

So, the issues of violence and sex find expression in his plays. So C. Coelho in his paper on Athol Fugard and Vijay Tendulkar observes “In his portrayal of human relations and tensions, Tendulkar depicts the violent tendency of egotistical man and equally self-centred society. His primary concern in plays like Saktharam Binder, Vultures, Ghashiram Kotwal and Silence! The court is in session is the failure of human relations due to man’s inherent greed and jealousy towards his fellow men. There is nothing superficial or exaggerated in his depiction of the vital and often violent stages of man in our society today.”

2) Portrayal of women in Patriarchy.

Catherine Thankamma in her paper “Women that patriarchy created : The plays of Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani and Mahasweta Devi” writes
“Patriarchy is the system that traces familial descent and economic inheritance down the male line. In a joint family the senior most male is the head, the patriarch, while in the nuclear families of today it is the father. Of Course, with the advent of feminism and a more ‘liberated’ mindset an open advocacy of the system is no longer considered fashionable particularly among the intellectual elite. The earliest image of woman that history provides is that of the ‘… Food gathering, child breeding- feeding female …’ who is both protected and victimized by the brute strength of the male, who gains a brief respite as mother-goddess and matriarch – then loses all claims to power and status as man invents the plough and takes over farming.”

In most of his major plays Tendulkar projects, women as victims. The plays highlight the gender stereotyping that is forced upon them. The roles allotted to women in the patriarchal setup are purely domestic – daughter, wife and mother. From birth the girl child is subjected to the negative reinforcement for her vulnerability to rape and assault. A girl / woman is expected to be meek, submissive, patient, she should subordinate her will and desires to those of the male unselfishly.
“Gidhade presents the pair of women Manik and Rama. And both the women exhibit contrast with each other. Manik symbolizes the concept of Free woman / Modern woman, whereas Rama represents traditional concept of Idealism.”

Among the five Vultures of Hari Pitale’s family, Rama is the exact opposite – she is a sparrow. As Shanta Gokhale writes

“She is painted in the pastel shades of innocence, purity, goodness and willing subservience. The only shade in her life that asserts itself boldly, albeit briefly is when she expresses her desire for the body of the outcast half-brother of her husband – the poet Rajaninath.”

In the play she is introduced indirectly in the opening scene of Act I through Rajaninath’s long song, who narrates the history of last 25 years of Hari Pitale’s house. He gives true picture of Rama’s life in the last twenty five years. He introduces her as

She was like a doe,

An innocent doe, untouched

As loving as the earth……..

She got married to Ramakant, the eldest son of Hari Pitale – A man addicted to liquor. As Rajaninath writes.

“But it was no home.
Not a home, but a hole in a tree
Where Vultures lived
In the shapes of men.

And the journey towards the miserable world starts for Rama. She is directly introduced in scene II, Act I of the play as she offers prayer devoutly to the basil. But she feels disturbed due to the quarrel inside the house and hurriedly finishes the rituals. Her husband Ramakant is beating the gardner who is asking for salary and Rama sympathises with him says “But we haven’t paid him for the last two months.”

She is being scolded by Manik, her sister-in-law for not getting her up at morning. Rama tries to defend herself by saying – “I called out your name, But your door was shut……”

Her father-in-law Pappa also scolds her for not giving him tea or calling him for tea at the time. She again defends herself helplessly and says
“I was waiting for you to get up.

So, like an average daughter-in-law of Indian society she is dominated by the in-laws. Tendulkar thus here explores how women have been shaped, conditioned and marginalized by patriarchy.

Being sympathetic by nature, Rama helps his half brother-in-law Rajaninath who lives in the garage as an outcast. Rajaninath helplessly watches the ordeal that Rama undergoes in the house of Vultures. He pours out his feelings for her in the poems that he writes. Though Rama is forbidden to feed Rajaninath, she does it secretly. Rajaninath writes in his song –

I remember –

Once when I found

No food for my hunger,

Stifling my coming tears

Within a Pillow,...........

She came and passed her fingers

Fondly over my head.......... 

She looked at the floor and said

I’ve brought some food for you.
From the kitchen.
No one knows will you eat it?
Don’t tell anyone
What I’ve done. Or else. I’m afraid….
She laid on me
The burden of her oath.
Again and Again.
It was her Oath, and
I kept it. I didn’t speak.
I never did speak.

Rama and Ramakant have been married for long but Ramakant, a severe addict to liquor has not been able to impregnate his wife who is earnestly longing for a child. Rajaninath tells us that

Living impotence
Of twenty-two endless years

He further writes about Rama’s craving for child like this.

“A Living corpse, a watchful Stone.
Like a worm, I watched and watched her.
For twenty-two long years.
All her hopes, her expectations
Were scorched, uprooted where they grew.
But she only knew
One longing
Only one.”

Her husband fully knows his inability to impregnate her yet takes her to various doctors, Saints, Swamiji etc. he says in Scene II, Act I to Rama.
“Let’s see this evening what miracles the swami will perform. Eh? Keep some – you know – about you. I mean. I don’t have any today. The bloody bank was shut yesterday.” Catherine Thankamma in this context points out:
“The plays of both Tendulkar and Dattani reveal that in the patriarchal set up marriage is not only a means of regulating sexual and reproductive behaviour but also a means of upholding male dominance. From childhood the girl child is made to feel that her life and destiny revolve around the biological cycles of Puberty – menstruation – child – birth – menopause. A woman who does not conceive becomes an ‘aberration’ even when the fault is not hers.”
And the same is the case with Rama. Rama’s anguish and disappointment at her childlessness has been poignantly divulged in her soliloquy in Act II, Scene II. Her survival in the house of vultures is –

“Every day, a new death. Every minute a thousand, million deaths. A pain like a million needles stuck in your heart. Blinding you, maddening you with pain.” The barrenness in her life is due to Ramakant who does not accept it and takes her to different Saints, Swami. She is fed up with such useless visit as she knows the reality. She says

“Everyday a new mystic, a Swami, an astrologer, a doctor ……rubbing your head at the feet of every lump of stone he tells you to stretching out a begging hand to them.”

Referring to her barreness she says –

“It’s not the fault of doctors, of learned men, of saints and sages! It’s not even my fault! This womb’s healthy and Sound, I Swear it! I was born to become a mother. This soil is rich, it’s hungry. But the seed won’t take root. If the seed’s soaked in poison, if it’s weak, feeble, lifeless, devoid of virtue – then why blame the soil? And if still the soil should cherish that seed – should with god as its’….″
Rama’s speech reminds the reader of the long speech of Leela Benare in the last Act of “Silence! The court is in Session.” In this speech, Rama gives vent to her agony and frustration. She is fed up with her husband’s drunken love-making and she declares to Rajaninath her intention of immolating herself. Rajaninath is the only person who understands Rama’s emotional needs and holds her in an embrace. Rama becomes pregant and Ramakant thinks that he is the father of the child and takes every care of Rama. Sudden change occurs in him and now Rama does not appear to him as a slave but loving wife and it proves another reality of the society that unless and until the woman does not become mother, the husband does not consider her as his soul mate. Now no abuses for Rama but excessive care for her only.

He says

“The mid-wife and the nurse, that cradle. I looked out….. are they for me or something? I was going to get a new cradle. But they said you should use an old one in which lots of children’ve played. That’s why I bloody took it out of the mess inside.”

He further says –

“Lie as quiet as you can. Take lots of rest. What?”
But when his brother Umakant informs him about the illicit relations of Rama and Rajaninath he is disillusioned and drinks a lot, with a thought that he will abort Rama, for the child is not his. But Rama’s longing for the child remains as Manik, her sister in-law, in a fit of revenge aborts her child and Rama becomes childless again.

The relation of Rama and Rajaninath is the subject of much controversy. Her craving for child leads her to Rajaninath. Among the five vultures of the house, their relation is pure, based on self-lessness yet people find immorality as they have evaluated their relation only on the ground of sex. But they failed to judge Rama as an individual. A woman who is not wife, sister-in-law but a woman with bundle of desires both emotional and physical. A woman who wants the love of in-laws- brother – in – law, father-in-law and sister in law. But she has not got a single blade of joy, since she arrived in the house of Hari Pitale. As Rajaninath writes –

“Then she stepped over 
The bridal measure,
And crossed the threshold 
Of her new home.
Not a home, but a hole in a tree
Where Vultures lived.

In the shapes of men.”

She has received only the abuses from the in-laws and her husband. Even when her long cherished dream is about to be fulfilled, it shatters due to Manik’s revengeful act of aborting her (Rama’s) child. And it establishes the fact that men are exploited & oppressed at work while women are exploited and oppressed at home and generally by other woman at home in the form of Mother-in-law or Sister-in-law. Rama as an individual is only understood by Rajaninath who loves her genuinely and pours out Rama’s agonies in his poems. Kalindi Despande in her Paper “Capitulation to conservatism: Vijay Tendulkar’s women characters” writes

“The hundred year old social Reform Movement against female subjugation seems to come alive in the literary representations of women in Tendulkar’s plays. They echo and re-echo Jyotiba Phooley’s discussion of this question, and her attribution of female suffering to the partiality of the institutions of family and marriage in Indian society.

In addition to Jyotiba Phooley, Vithal Ramji Shinde was another reformer who discussed women’s issues with remarkable sensitivity. He
throughout maintained that a woman has a body and the body has its own needs. In other words instead of reviling female sexuality he talked about it with respect. Rama in “The Vultures” almost embodies Shinde’s thought. The way Tendulkar has depicted the mental upheaval of Rama and her agony of unfulfilled desire after she sees the half naked Rajaninath is highly intense and sensitive.” She says

You can’t endure them. But you can’t pull them out…………… many years like this. I have endured so many – how much more must I endure? How long must I dam up my tears?

One can see here how Tendulkar has gone a step ahead of Shinde. For what he boldly suggests is that the sexual desire and the maternal longing are two different strands of female sexuality. In the soliloquy of Rama it appears as if the age old oppression of the woman kind and her pent up unfulfilled desire for sexual transaction finds at long last an outlet by angrily setting aside all the confines of conventionality. The intensity with which she embraces Rajaninath after the soliloquy is like a river breaking through all its dams. According to Dr. Shriram Lagoo there is something archetypal and primordial in this embrace! It is a revelation of an eternal truth. Because of this archetypal appeal although Rama’s action may appear adultery in the eyes of the world, the reader / spectator
does not disapprove of her. In it Tendulkar has paid a fulsome compliment to female sexuality.”

Not only as an individual her voice remains unheard but as a wife she does not have any space. She feels suffocated in that house of vultures and begs Ramakant to consider the change of their residence. She says – Take a job somewhere. Whatever you can get. Never mind if it doesn’t pay well. We’ll live in poverty.......... But let’s finish this death by imprisonment. Let’s end this dreadful play-acting. Stop this murderous deceit honestly! Put an end to it. Let’s get out from this overpowering house....”

But he rejects her request due to his male chauvinism and cupidity. He says –

“Look here, Rama! In this house, we’re not accustomed to listening to any smartness from women! No man in our family’s been a bloody henpecked husband, what? I know very well indeed what to do, what not to do. No need for a woman to teach me sense.”

So, Rama, represents Indian wife who is dominated by the husband Ramakant becomes pauper and he leaves the house with Rama who at the
end is totally broken due to the abortion of her child. As Rajaninath
notices Ramakant and Rama locking the house and leaving it. He writes –

So Rama went away

A statue of emotions chilled to stone.

Alive, she followed after

That living death, her master,

With the dogged loyalty

Of a barren beast.

Apart from Rama, the play presents another woman character Manik, the
sister-in-law of Rama. If Rama is sensitive, submissive, tender little bird
Manik is exactly opposite. She can be considered as one of Vultures in
the house of Hari Pitale. No doubt that we do not feel pity on her as she
lives immoral life, full of voluptuousness – a woman who drinks, parties,
wanders and changes her lover day by day. She lives only for money.
Immorality in her character rises to climax when she becomes pregnant
without marriage.
But her character also arouses feeling of pity when her child is aborted and her own brothers kick her on her belly. She also suffers in the patriarchal world. **Shanta Gokhale** truly observes –

“The contrast between Manik and Rama is black and white. Yet with all Manik’s crudeness, she is only a female vulture and for that she will ultimately move us to some compassion. Her brothers who fight each other with every weapon draw blood, thirst for more, stand united when it comes to her. They tease and mock her and throw the vilest obscenities at her. They ruthlessly fracture her leg in a plot to blackmail her supposedly wealthy lover and divide the spoils between themselves….”

So, through both the women characters of the play Tendulkar has tried to evaluate the condition and status of women in the patriarchal world.”

3) **Love for capitalistic values V/s Love and Relations.**

Tendulkar’s plays offer a perception of reality. The period in which Tendulkar wrote his plays is significant. This post – war period was marked by its negotiation with modernism, its revaluation of old values
and its march towards individualism. Tendulkar is perhaps the most important dramatist in Marathi drama who displays an acute sense of history in positioning the modernist strand and the system that it has given rise to. It is a period in which the break-up of the feudal system was accomplished and a new capitalistic society had come to the fore. And it is explored by Tendulkar in his play “The Vultures” (Gidhade).

The play shows how the capitalistic values destroy human love and relations. This theme is presented through the four major characters of the play.

1) Hari Pitale cheats his own brother in business.

2) His children Ramakant, Umakant and Manik inherit this nature and for money they do not hesitate to kill one another.

Pappa Hari Pitale and his brother Sakharam build up a huge business firm called “The Hari Sakharam Company” – a construction firm. It is through sheer hard labour they achieve this feat. As days pass by, papa wrests the company from his brother by means of treachery and false law suits. As a result, Sakharam Pitale finds himself on the street. No doubt Hari Pitale labored a lot to establish the business but love for money inspires him to forget his relation with his own brother. He becomes
selfish and instead of sharing the business with his brother he grabs it treacherously. So capitalistic value wins over the love for brother or relation.

Further it is exemplified through the ill-treatment of Hari Pitale by his own children – Ramakant and Umakant. They are only lovers of money and their only purpose is to receive money form their father anyhow. Their craving for money inspires them to forget father-son relation. They always abuse Hari Pitale. They inherited greed, treachery and ego, as a legacy from their father. The tender relation of father-son is missing in this house. Instead of care, love and respect the sons beat and quarrel frequently with the father. Pappa feels afraid of his two sons. He says: “He’s ruined the whole business. But it’s crime if I mention it! The other day he raised, a flowervase to hit me, Going to kill me, he was! Die, rather!

He further expresses his disgust for his selfish sons “If I die, it’ll be a release: they’re all waiting for it. But I’m your father, after all! If I die, I’ll become a ghost. I’ll sit on your chest! I won’t let you enjoy a rupee of it. I earned it all.
Pappa laments on the behaviour of his own sons who turn into devil for the sake of money. When he laments that it has been his stupidity to produce bastards like them. Ramakant retorts:

“Pappa, Pappa! As the seed, so the tree. Did we ever ask to be produced?

On another occasion he tells his brother Umakant that a mangy dog would have made a better father. Umakant is only too ready to agree with his brother. And, all this in the presence of their father! But the father is unable to defend himself due to his past crime.

Suddenly, when his brother Sakharam arrives, the brothers heard him demanding money form Pappa and it arouses suspicion that their father still has some money somewhere. So the children – Ramakant, Umakant and Manik torture Pappa and extract the truth regarding money. Their treatment of Pappa shows that the values in the society are distorted, and in search of luxury and comfort, the modern generation has totally forgotten the bond of the relations. Pappa is tortured in such inhuman way that he admits that in the Punjab bank he has deposited money. This scene, – scene V, of Act I exposes the perverted values in the society in which, individualism, capitalistic values win over relations. Money has the power to destroy even blood relations.
The same capitalistic urge also acts as a hindrance between the relationship of brother and sister. They want the whole property and do not like the share of Manik so they want to get rid of Manik and it becomes clear in Act II, Scene I of the play. In the game of cards Umakant is about to choke Manik to death. They are in need of money, so hatch a plan of blackmailing Manik’s lover – the Raja of Hondur. In order to prevent her from meeting her lover, they break Manik’s leg. It is interesting to note their conversation.

Umakant : Yelled her head off last night.....

Ramakant : You know! She was – terrified. Y’know, brother, she thought we were going to – homm! Natural, y’know. She thought we were going to murder her.

Umakant : Murder my foot! Waste of time.

Ramakant : The bloody bonesetter didn’t turn up till the afternoon. What negligence, brother! Bone broken at night. Bone setter nowhere to be found. Not till the afternoon.

Umakant : and when I tried first aid. How she screamed, the bitch.

Ramakant : but brother, the work was very well done. Little Manik can’t go out now! Leg fractured! Plaster! baby in her belly!
It shows the brutality in the character of the brothers and the shocking thing is that it is for their own sister. For them she is only the source of money. They want to fulfill their need of money by blackmailing her lover and when they hear the news of Raja of Hondur’s death, they are disillusioned and in a rage, they kick Manik’s belly hard, she aborts. This particular scene, is no doubt criticised by everyone as Indian society believes in family values. The relationship of Mother-son, father-son, brother-sister and husband-wife are the pillars of the society on which the civilization is built up but here the love for money destroys all. The family relations obtaining among different characters – father-son, brother-brother, brother-sister, husband-wife, uncle-nephew, brother-in-law, sister-in-law symbolize incarnations of love, anger, greed, fright, pride, hate and jealousy.

Even the relation between the two brothers is not cordial. They are not only against their father and sister but they also quarrel for money and equal share on the house. Umakant, the younger brother all the time demands the jewels of his mother which are in Ramakant’s possession and he knows that Ramakant has lost all that. He says “What’ve you got left to look after? Double mortgage on the house. The office has gone already. The bank’ll, attach, the account. The creditors
fall like jackals on the rest of the property. Pappa’s account cleaned out. Manik’s share’s all gone. So what’ve you got that’s yours, you good – for nothing?

Ramakant tries to convince him to leave his claim over the house as Umakant is earning well. He wants to keep all the property as his business is not going well. Umakant can not bear this, he wants his share and both the brothers quarrel.

Umakant : First settle our account! Then I’ll move! Pappa’s hidden hoard. Manik’s money. Mother’s jewels…..

Ramakant : Ask from outside! Then you’ll get them! All after you’ve got out! Out!

Umakant : Go on. Wait. As if I’m all ready to leave. I’ll quit when I’ve got every single paisa, you bastard! I won’t let you get away with it. I’ll sit on your neck. I’ll make you puke it out! Bloody animal! Swindler! I’ll see you in the gutter!”

It is Umakant who tells Ramakant about the illegal relations of Rama and Rajaninath. The family members are tied with only blood relation outwardly but actually emotionally and psychologically they are poles
apart. They only live under one roof but hate each other due to their possessive nature.

The domestic life of Pitale family shows modern man’s love for materialistic values which has made the life mechanical and impersonal and it has shaken man’s sense of security and in that search he destroys himself.

The play can be compared with Eugene O’Neil’s drama *Desire under the Elms* as far as capitalistic values are concerned. In O’Neil’s play each character is possessive regarding Farm house and cannot establish harmonious relationship within the family. Like the Papa of “The Vultures” Ephraim Cabot is possessive of his house and Cabot farm – house. He is extremely self-centred like papa. In his fierce possessiveness, he wants to burn down the farm, so that it would not pass on to anyone else and creates barrier between him and his sons. Even the characters of Simeon, Peter and Eben Cabot resemble with the three brothers Umakant, Ramakant and Rajaninath. In O’Neil’s play the three brothers cannot establish cordial relations due to their desire for the possession on the farm-house. Their sense of possessiveness keeps them
mentally apart from one another. Their dialogues closely resemble with the conversation between Ramakant and Umakant.

When they assert their rights over the property, Eben violently opposes “you’ve no right. She wan’t year Maw; it was her farm. Didn’t he steal it form her? She’s dead. It’s my farm.”

The three brothers hate Ephraim Cabot just as the three brothers of “The Vultures” hate and insult Papa. So the universal greedy nature of men is presented by Tendulkar in the play.

Tendulkar shows in “The Vultures” love for materialistic things which can destroy the harmony of the house and it leads to a war of possession in which all the members of the family are defeated by the sense of isolation.
Dramatic technique in “The Vultures”

Mr. V. B. Deshpande, eminent critic of Marathi Drama writes in “Tendulkar’s contribution to Indian Drama”.

“Tendulkar’s stage directions, as in shaw, Ibsen and Pinter are quite significant and are a part of the dramatic meaning. Such detailed stage directions indicate to the theatre persons the extent of the dramatist’s intuitive awareness of the stage. It is this awareness that has impacted Tendulkar’s dialogues and dramatic idiom. Generally one finds that Marathi drama suffers from verbosity and cheap sentimentalism. In other words the dramatists are interested in telling a good story only. But Tendulkar has right from the start kept himself aloof from these trends. This of course does not mean that he does not tell a good story but that he is also interested in effective presentation. It is this interest in form and technique that has enabled Tendulkar to remain “experimental” continually…… in play after play he has made effective presentation of the latent violence and lust in the middle class life, the consequent devastation and the essential existential loneliness of man……….\"
“The Vultures” is superb example of above stated views with regard to the use of dramatic technique in the play.

The title Gidhade (Vultures’) itself is indicative of the unpleasant subject matter of the play. The ferocity, ruthlessness, avarice and cunningness of the Vultures is inherent in all the members of Papa’s family. And thus the title becomes the device to represent the theme and characters of the play. The action of the whole drama takes place in the interior of a house which includes drawing room, staircases, a bedroom, doors, and platform and alter of sacred basil outside and the old garage – and this human home is presented as a nest of vultures.

The songs of Rajaninath an illegitimate son of Pappa Pitale have been used as a dramatic device to indicate the vulturine nature of the character. The songs are means through which the past and present of the Pitale family is presented. In the opening scene he sings rather long song from which we understand twenty two years have passed during which time the incidents narrated in the play took place. He notices Ramakant and Rama leaving the house locking it. As they exit there is sound of fierce wind, and also a constant sound like wind howling over a plain and a shrill screeching of Vulture. The departure of Rama and Ramakant
kindles his memory and he begins to write a song. He remembers the day Ramakant married Rama. Then she was:

“……….. Like a doe.
An innocent doe untouched
As loving as the earth”.

But the house where she has been brought is not a home but

“But it was no home
Not a home, but a hole in a tree
Where Vultures lived
In the shapes of men.

So Rajaninath, speaking in poetry, like a chorus, in scene I and IV in Act I and VIII in Act II provides the reality of a family unit, who fights with one another to grab the property.

In the post-independence Indian drama, “home” has been used as a literal and symbolic place. Aparna Bhargava Dharwadkar writes in the book “Theatres of Independence.”
“Vijay Tendulkar’s drama of ideas represents perhaps the most substantial exploration of the symbolism of home because his customary method is to translate social and political conflicts into personal dilemmas and resituate them within the domestic sphere. The material-visual “look” of a home in his plays is always replete with the signs of class, ideology and cultural positioning. Home is the domain of private experience but the social consciousness of its inhabitants is entangled in the problems of caste, class, gender, community, marriage and the family. This involvement threatens every one of the relationships on which the family is founded, especially those of husband and wife parent and child, brother and sister.

The main stage setting in Gidhade is “the interior for a house…. That reminds you of the hollow of tree” – an apt visual and tactile symbol for a family that has filled the void created by its loss of economic status with uncontrolled emotional and physical violence. The living room of the house is the scene of incessant and grotesque confrontations between papa and his three adult children, a room above the garage is the sanctuary where Rama, an innocent married to Ramakant, tries to find temporary solace in a relationship with her husband’s illegitimate brother, Rajaninath.”
Soliloquies are used by Tendulkar in this play as an important dramatic device which advances not just only the events of the dramas but they are used as voicing the psychological turbulence originating from the self-conflict in the character’s predicament. Rajaninath’s poems are nothing but soliloquies which occur in Scene I, Act I. in which he compares the family members with vultures for their avrice and cunningness. In scene VIII, Act II, he writes

“The tale of the five vultures

Had this end.

The story of men accursed.

Or else of vultures cursed

To live their lives a men.

and intensifies the fatal result of the vulturtine instincts of his family members. He has narrated the story to explore the meaning of man’s life which is victimised by selfishness, hatred, jealousy etc. he has presented a story in which the brothers hate the father, the brothers abort the child of sister and even a sister in frenzy, aborts sister-in-laws. So the horrid chain of violence devastates the whole family and Rajaninath though knowing well that the wicked persons cannot be saved, prays for mercy to them.
“Oh, show them some compassion!
Shows a path to them.
Hold out to them
A merciful hand.
That will bring release.

Ramakant, craving for a comfortable life and his longing for child and hope is very well reflected in his soliloquy in scene V of Act II. He says “I tell you, Rama, our kid’ll bring us luck. No more hardship, what? I’ve got a transaction on right now. If it comes off, then what d’ you know? A bloody car. A chauffeur. A total bloody renovation for the house! We’ll have it done……”

This excitement and hope for better prospect is thwarted when his brother informs of the real source of Rama’s pregnancy. This revelation breaks him and in a long soliloquy he pours out his frustration. He says in scene VII of Act II,

“Father, brother, sister, wife, Kiddie – no, he’s not mine. He’s my stepbrother’s kiddie. Not mine! His oh! Oh!”
The most moving example of soliloquy of the play is Rama’s long, moving monologue in scene II, Act II in which she gives vent to her agony and frustration. Her anguish and disappointment at her childlessness is presented. Her tormented life in the house of “Vultures” is ……”

“Every day, a new death. Every minute a thousand million death.

Referring to her barrenness she says.

“It’s not the fault of doctors, of learned men, of saints and sages: It’s not even my fault: This womb’s healthy and sound. I swear it. I was born to become a mother. This soils’s rich, it’s hungry. But the seed won’t take root. If the seed’s soaked in poison, if it’s weak feeble, lifeless, devoid of virtue- ‘why blame the soil.

So her disgust for her husband’s drunken state and his inability to beget a child is presented. It is this frustration of Rama that seeks redemption in relation with Rajaninath.

Mr. Samik Bandyopadhyay writes in “Introduction” of collected play in translation”. –
“The Birdcalls serve as a non-human sound reference, offering sound transfers/translations for the human acts which have lost their humanity altogether while the first scene closes on “The loud screeching for the Vultures” the second opens with a cuckoo call that “suddenly ends on a strangled note” breaking rudely in upon Rama’s prayer to the basil in the courtyard. The obscenities, “Exchange of shouts” “the sound of blows … Of beating “ do not allow Rama to concentrate on her prayers any more.” The disruption of a scared act in a way intimates the violent destructive process at work stifling and strangling the normal rhythm of relationships working through a family……”

Tendulkar uses the contrast pattern in the delineation of the characters. He has presented man’s avarice, cruelty and viciousness in Papa Ramakant, Umakant and Manik against the gentle and humane Rama and Rajaninath. The absurd relationship of vulturish characters is set against the tender sensitive, relations between Rama and Rajaninath.

The play is criticized due to its vulgar language. But the dramatist has used such lewd ribald and filthy language in the dialogues of the devilish members of the Pitale family to highlight the abnormality, while Rama and Rajaninath speak normal decent language in their emotional
entanglement. The play is rich in the use of symbol. As A.P. Dani writes in “Vijay Tendulkar’s Gidhade and John Webster’s “The Duchess of Malfi” –

“The family relations obtaining among different characters – father-son, brother-brother, brother-sister, husband-wife, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, uncle-nephew symbolize incarnation’s of love, anger, greed, fright, pride, hate and jealousy. The murky dilapidated, denlike house stands for corrupt values of the family and psychosis of the raving magalomaniacs. The ringing telephone brings in complaints stressing the disharmony of the wicked characters with the outside world. The deep drunkenness of the “Vultures” intensifies their criminality…… the images of preying birds, hunted animals, repulsive insects, ghosts, evil spirits, demons, goblins, darkness, death, poison, corpse, carcass, rites of black magic, aggravate the abominating and awesome evil in the play.”

On the whole, the play is, no doubt, naturalistic in its portrayal of domestic violence caused by greed.